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TEDDY HER DAUGHTER

ANNA · CHAPIN · RAY

1. Fiction, American.

TEDDY: HER DAUGHTER

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

TEDDY

HER DAUGHTER

A Sequel to Teddy: Her Book

BY

ANNA CHAPIN RAY

AUTHOR OF

"TEDDY: HER BOOK," "PHEBE: HER PROMOTION"

ILLUSTRATED BY J. B. GRAFF

BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

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THE NEW YORK
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October, 1901

Printers
S. J. Parkhill & Co., Boston, U. S. A.

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TEDDY: HER DAUGHTER

CHAPTER ONE

QUANTUCK holds two secrets in its keeping. To every newcomer it is confided, as a fact known only to a favored few, that Scotch heather grows somewhere upon the island. This open secret is merely the preparation for the true mystery. The actual secret lies, not in the existence of the heather, but in the spot where it is to be found. Rumor says that the person who brought it to the island, has never dared tell the exact place, for fear of the plant being exterminated by zealous collectors. Certain it is that only a few natives know where the heather grows, and that those few, however truthful they may be in other directions, will fib sturdily, rather than divulge their secret to the members of the summer colony. And now, in

spite of all their precautions, Betty Farrington and Mrs. Gifford Barrett were sitting at their ease on the moorland, arranging in bunches their lapfuls of pinky purple spikes.

"They needn't feel so set up over their old heather," Betty observed disrespectfully, as she cast aside her hat and let the sun beat down fiercely upon her tawny red pigtails. "You can buy it in New York, any day, larger than this."

"It isn't the heather I care about," Mrs. Barrett said viciously. "I'm not especially devoted to modest flowerets of this kind. I prefer good, large peonies, myself. But when these natives look you straight in the eye and solemnly aver that they have never heard of a sprig of heather on the whole island, it harasses my moral sense. Betty, I will deck myself with a wreath of the stuff, to-night, and parade the streets of Quantuck."

"I'll go ahead of you with a bell, like Tommy Smith over in Town. Wasn't it a queer chance that made us leave the path and strike out across the moors?"

"Chance! It was the hand of Providence seeking to avenge the cause of the summer boarder. Murder will out, Betty, and so

will heather. It was only waiting for me to come to rescue it from oblivion."

The girl laughed, as she rested her brown cheek caressingly against the stiff little blossoms.

"It has waited a good while. But aren't they cunning things?"

"M—m, yes. But to me they represent triumph. This is the twelfth season I have been here, Betty, and, every year, I have had this heather vaunted in my hearing, always with the soft pedal down. I felt that it wouldn't be dignified to hunt for it; but now that I have been mercifully guided to the spot—" She paused expressively.

Betty watched her, as she sat there against the background of greenish-grey moorland and greenish-blue sea. Mrs. Barrett was not exactly a handsome woman; but she was alert and comely, and altogether beautiful in the eyes of her young niece. Next to her father and mother, Betty adored her merry, whimsical Aunt Phebe, and the twenty-four years' difference in their ages was no barrier to their intimacy.

"Aunt Babe," Betty said suddenly; "how did it happen that you never grew up?"

"Betty!" Mrs. Barrett's tone was sharp with feigned horror. "Am I still in pinafores?"

"No; but you are nothing but a girl. You seem years younger than Uncle Giff and mamma."

"It is the effect of early piety, Betty," Mrs. Barrett remarked gravely, while she went on sorting over her heather.

Betty laughed irreverently.

"Yes, I know. Papa has told me what a dear child you were. He used to say that by good rights Mac ought to have been your son."

Mrs. Barrett rose hastily.

"Speaking of sons, my own offspring will be clamoring for their mother."

"Where is Uncle Giff?"

"Buried in an opus that refuses to ope. Truly, Betty, we must start for home. It will take us at least an hour to get there."

"I don't want to stir from this spot. I was never here before and I love it."

"When the boys come, you can bring them over here," Mrs. Barrett suggested, as she picked up Betty's sailor hat and then attempted to pick up her reluctant niece.

There was a moment of merry struggle. Then Betty rose and smoothed her ruffled hair, while she gave one last look about her. On three sides of them, the rolling moorland stretched away and away, with never a house in sight. Only an occasional scrub oak broke the level carpet of barren heath and mealy plum. On the fourth side, quarter of a mile away, was the life-saving station of Stormcrest with the waves thundering below it at the foot of the sandy cliff. An abandoned hotel and a farmhouse or two stood near it, with a primitive chapel between. Beyond it rocked the limitless, sailless ocean, all blue and green and copper-colored in the late afternoon sunshine. The sea was an old friend to Betty. Each of her fourteen summers had been spent, in part, at least, at Quantuck; yet she never tired of watching its changing face. To-day, however, her eyes rested on it absently.

"I wonder how I shall like them," she said thoughtfully; "and I wonder a good deal more how they will like Quantuck."

"Mac has been here twice, so he knows what is before him," Mrs. Barrett suggested, as she rolled her bicycle towards the path, a thousand feet away.

"Yes; but once I wasn't born, and the other time, three years ago, we had gone off island before he came, so I don't know much about it, or about him either for that matter. Aunt Babe, I do think ready-made cousins are a trial!"

Mrs. Barrett laughed at the outburst, as she saw the despondency written on Betty's brow.

"Aren't they all ready-made?" she asked.

"No; your children aren't. I grew up with them, and I am fitted to them and to their ways. Mac and Harold are different. They are my cousins, and I suppose I shall have to like them, whether I want to or not. The honest fact is that I saw Mac for two days once, and I never saw Harold, and that I don't care a fig for either of them. It is a great nuisance to be related to them."

"It is just as well your mother doesn't hear you say that, young woman," Phebe observed.

Betty made a wry face.

"I wouldn't say it to anybody but you, Aunt Babe. Mamma and Uncle Hubert are always talking about THE McALISTERS in large capitals, as if they were Tudors or Guelphs or something. I like to belong to a respectable family; but I don't like people

any better because they have a pint or two of McAlister blood. And these boys——"

"Mac is a dear fellow," Mrs. Barrett interposed. "It has always been a mystery to me how it happened, after such a childhood. He was an imp; but now he really would be angelic, if he were not quite so healthy."

"I don't like angelic boys," Betty said perversely. "Besides, to go back to my point, I am not so sure that a McAlister angel is any better than a—Jones one."

"Anyway, you can judge for yourself before long; the boys will be here by the first of August," Mrs. Barrett said, as she mounted her bicycle.

According to Quantuck standards, it was a still, windless day, and they had taken advantage of it to ride to Stormcrest, on the southern shore of the island. From the life-saving station, the bicycle path made a long detour through the moors, and Mrs. Barrett, always restless and eager for change, had proposed their walking across to the farther side of the loop. It was this chance which had led them into the midst of the patch of purple blossoms. They had come back into the path once more, and they rode away along the nar-

row black line of cinders across the moorland, into the edge of Town and then out on the broad white road which leads eastward without a bend from Town straight over to Quantuck. Flying along with the breeze and the sun at their backs, the dazzling road before them, they lost all desire to talk in the mere physical exhilaration. It was enough to be alive and moving swiftly through the clean, wind-swept air of the Gulf Stream. For the hour, Mrs. Barrett was no older than her niece; quite as keenly she enjoyed the quick rush towards home. It was not until they left the road and came into the narrow pathway through the scrub oaks that Betty broke the silence.

"But I don't like angels," she reiterated.

Quantuck dines at noon and sups at night. The Farrington household were still lingering over their supper table, when Mrs. Barrett came striding into the room.

"Betty, my dearest and only niece, my dolly is leaking sawdust, and I abhor the fantan lady!"

Betty looked up tranquilly from her plate.

"You have said so before, Aunt Babe. What is the matter now?"

"That!" Mrs. Barrett pointed to the tuft of

blossoms which stood up like a purple aigrette in Mrs. Farrington's hair.

"What? Our heather?"

"She says it isn't heather!" Mrs. Barrett exploded.

"What did you ask her for?" Mrs. Farrington inquired. "She doesn't know anything about it."

Mrs. Barrett dropped into a chair and put both elbows on the table.

"Teddy! Ask her! I didn't; she informed me. She revels in informing people and, the less correct the information, the more she revels in it and the more people she informs. She was on her veranda, when I rode up to the door, and she said, in what Giff calls her *con amore* voice, 'My dear Mrs. Barrett, I wonder if you think that is the real heather.' I said 'Certainly,' and marched into the house; but her voice came after me to inform me that heather only grew in one little spot on the island, and she knew this didn't come from there because no summer person had ever found it."

"Did she say *summer person?*"

"She did. You'd better adopt the phrase, Ted. But isn't that logical?"

"As logical as she generally is."

"In general, Babe, I share your views of the fan-tan lady; but, this time, I agree with her," Mr. Farrington remarked. "Do have some of this sea trout. There is more than Betty ought to eat, and she has principles about having the platter cleared. No? Well, I am no botanist; but these purple sticks don't look to me like any heather I saw in Scotland."

"Billy!"

"Papa!"

The two exclamations were simultaneous; but Mrs. Barrett followed hers up with a question.

"Why not?" she demanded.

"Be-cause. Beyond that excellent reason, I can't tell you. I am guided by intuition, not botany."

"It looks just the same," Betty protested.

"Appearances are deceitful, then."

"Mamma, what do you think?" Betty's tone showed that she was appealing to her supreme court.

"When doctors disagree, take to patent medicines," Mrs. Farrington responded enigmatically. "I decline to commit myself."

"How unkind of you to sneak out of it that

way, Ted! Besides, you have already committed yourself by wearing it in your hair."

"Ask Mac, when he comes," Mr. Farrington suggested. "He is a botanist; at least, he walks abroad, with a species of biscuit-tin lashed to his neck. He says it is for specimens; but I dimly suspect it is for extra rations. Why don't you have one, Betty? It would just suit your appetite."

"It—is—heather!" Mrs. Barrett proclaimed, as she rose. "I know it is, and so does Giff. Mr. Drayton thinks so, too."

"Did he say so?" Mrs. Farrington asked. "That ought to settle it."

"Well," Mrs. Barrett confessed rather reluctantly; "he said it looked some like it; but he wa'n't sure. Anyway, I am going to suppress the fan-tan lady."

Mrs. Farrington followed her to the door.

"Wait one minute, Babe. I had a letter from Hope, this afternoon, and a note from Hubert to say he will surely be down, next month. The boys will get to The Savins, day after to-morrow, and be here in about ten days. Can you let some of them sleep in your house?"

"Yes." Phebe's drawl was hospitality it-

self. "We can pack the children into one room, and Giff can give up his sanctum and take to the beach, if you need that."

"Phebe! He is right in the midst of his sonata. You mustn't disturb him."

"He needn't be so easily disturbed," his wife answered, with the calm lack of comprehension born of a mind that never tried to create.

But Mrs. Farrington, who knew the woes of interrupted authorship, thought differently. Accordingly she interposed in defence of the half-completed sonata.

"We only need one room," she said with decision. "Down here, we can pack ourselves into small compass. If Cicely comes, she can have one of our spare rooms, and the boys the other. Then, if Hubert and Allyn are here at the same time, and if you can put your boys together, I'll send them over to you, for the nights."

"I tell Ted that I think I shall lease the hotel, next year," Mr. Farrington remarked. "I thought the Lodge was one of the largest of the old cottages; but we are always crowded."

"You might offer to hire a room of the fan-

tan lady," Phebe said, as she rose for the second time.

"No use. She is expecting friends, day after to-morrow," Mrs. Farrington said, laughing. "She spells her friends with a capital *F*, and never tells what manner of man they may be. Betty, if you really have finished your supper, I think we'll adjourn to the veranda."

"And I must go home to put my sons into bed and my heather into water," Mrs. Barrett added. "Betty, I hope you are prepared to stand by your colors. To the marrow of my spine, I am convinced that this is the heather."

CHAPTER TWO

IT was impossible to say why the Farringtons had bought Dandelion Lodge, instead of one of the modern cottages on the cliff. Viewed in the light of a summer residence, it was neither artistic nor convenient. One visitor who knew that Mrs. Farrington wrote and who vaguely linked her name with the verse to be found in the Sunday papers, alluded to the Lodge as "a real poet's home." More strictly speaking, its architectural features were those of an elaborate henhouse. Long ago, when fishermen from Town came over to Quantuck for the fall catch of cod, Dandelion Lodge, then nameless, consisted of a great square living-room and a loft above it. Later, another room was built for the fisherman's horse; later still, more rooms were added for the wife and daughters. There was no orderly arrangement of these rooms. They grouped themselves unceremoniously and at all angles around the original structure; but they left

unchanged the great living-room and the broad veranda overlooking the sea.

Orderly houses could be built, any day. It was not every day that Mrs. Farrington could find a house where she went up-stairs from a corner of the dining-room, and where the only approach to her writing-room lay between the kitchen stove and the rain-water barrel. For six years, they had hired the Lodge, in spite of the derisive comments of the dwellers on the cliff. Then, one October day, they had sailed away from the island with content in their hearts and an extra key in Mr. Farrington's pocket. They had bought Dandelion Lodge.

Every one who passed beneath the chubby old figure-head mounted above the doorway, agreed that the living-room of the Lodge was the coziest place in all Quantuck. Mrs. Farrington had rummaged the island for the ancient furnishings which filled the room, and black oak and mahogany, pewter and delft and glass, all spoke of the cobwebs that had draped them for years upon years. Above the low square fireplace hung a wooden tablet where in quaint script was written the legend that formerly had swung before the street

door, for there had been a time when the Lodge was the only tavern in all Quantuck.

QUANTUCK LODGING HOUSE

OF R. DRAYTON.

Rules of this Lodging House.

Four Pence a night for Bed.
Sixpence with Supper.
No more than 5 to sleep in 1 bed.
No beer allowed in the kitchen.
No smoking upstairs.
No clothes to be washed on Sundays.
No boots to be worn in bed.
No dogs allowed upstairs.
No fighting or gambling in the house.
No extra charge for traveller's luggage.
No razor grinders or tinkers to be taken in.
Organ grinders to sleep in the washhouse.
Some go to church to laugh and talk.
Some go to church to take a walk.
Others go there to wink and nod,
While a few go there to worship God.

Mangling
Done Here.

IZAKIAH O. DRAYTON, Prop.

Below it, a bright fire was blazing on the andirons, and in front of the blaze sat Betty.

Flushed with the heat of the fire and with

the effort of wielding the heavy tongs, her brown eyes glowing and her thick red-gold hair escaping from its braids to curl up all about her face, she seemed a vivid bit of color splashed upon the dull canvas of the sombre room. At fourteen, Betty Farrington was perfectly healthy, perfectly truthful and rather more tempestuous than the laws of decorum made necessary.

Fourteen years before, when Mrs. Farrington had been asked to name her only child, she had not hesitated.

"I want her to be named Elizabeth, for mother," she had said, and she had added, with a recollection of her own girlish dislike for the substitution of Teddy for her more dignified name of Theodora; "and she shall never, never be nicknamed."

But from the day of her christening party to the present hour, Elizabeth Farrington had never been called anything but Betty, and Mrs. Farrington herself had been the principal offender. One look at the girl was enough. She was created on just the roly-poly lines that suited the name. For the rest, she had a small conscience, a pug nose and an irrepressible sense of humor.

"Well, Betty, alone in your glory? What a splendid fire!"

She sprang up eagerly.

"Is the train in? I didn't hear the whistle. Does it rain very hard? Are you wet? Have you had a good time? Have you had any supper?"

"You are your mother's own daughter, Betty," her father said, as he kissed her. "She always used to ask about nine questions at a time. Yes, the train is in, because we came on it; it rains hard, because we felt it; we aren't wet, because we had an umbrella; we had a good time, because we always do that when we are rid of you; and we have had supper, because we knew from past experience that you probably would have eaten up everything in the house. Does that answer all your questions? Now sit down and tell me the news."

"In a minute. I must help mamma first. You know she never can find the heads of her hatpins, and we don't want the poor dear to sleep in her best toque."

Five minutes later, Betty came down-stairs again, arm in arm with "the poor dear," now safely divested of her toque. Side by side,

they looked like sisters, for Betty was nearly as tall as her mother, and Mrs. Farrington bore her years easily. There was no especial reason that she should do otherwise, for they had brought her the three gifts she would have asked from them: loyal friends, perfect health and professional success. Unspoiled, eager for new work, new ideals, she had gone on untiringly, too much interested in the events of each day to worry over the fact that her youth was passing. She felt as young as ever; her mirror showed her neither grey hairs nor wrinkles, and there was only the tall girl at her side to remind her that she and her husband must some day step aside to give place to another generation.

"This fire is an inspiration, Betty, on a drizzly night like this," she said, as she dropped down on the settle and rested her toe on the low fender. "Going to afternoon teas in Town is hard work, and I am glad to get home again. What have you been doing with yourself, dear?"

But Betty had discovered the chocolates in her father's pocket, and there was a perceptible pause before she replied. When she did

speak, her words were indistinct with the indistinctness born of *nougat.*

"Down on the beach till it rained. Aunt Babe and the boys were there, and Uncle Giff came later. Oh, and he has had a letter, this afternoon, asking him to go to some kind of an English festival thing to conduct *The Merman.* The surf was splendid, and we just sat under the awning and watched it and planned things to do when the boys come. We are going to have a box-cart party to Tatakis, for one thing, and go over the life-saving station. And then it began to rain, so we came up here and made fudge."

"Oh, my poor kitchen!" Mrs. Farrington sighed, for experience had taught her the aftermath of Betty's fudge parties.

But Betty swept on with her narrative, regardless of interruption. The *nougat* was swallowed now, and her words were spoken with a dainty finish, although they came tumbling over each other so fast that they left her hearers mentally gasping for breath, in their efforts to keep pace with her.

"And then I went over there to supper. We had lobster, and I was so hungry! Paul had to be sent away from the table for grab-

bing. Uncle Giff was awfully cross to him. I think his sonata must have gone wrong, for when I passed the door of his den, the floor was just covered with pieces of torn-up paper. And then I came home and built up the fire, and——"

"Take a good, long breath and then start fresh, Betty," her father advised her, as she paused to choose another chocolate.

She had been standing on the hearthrug. Now she perched herself upon the arm of his chair and rested her head against his own. The flickering firelight brought out the same red-gold gleam from them both; but Betty's eyes were brown, true McAlister eyes her father called them.

"You aren't respectful, papa," she said, as she put her arm around his neck and tweaked his mustache rebukingly. "If you will go off and leave me for the whole afternoon, of course I shall have things to tell you, when you come back. Did you go to the Mitchells, mamma; and did you see anything of Katharine?"

"She had on a blue print frock, and she passed me some little pink cookies on a little purple plate. Ted, I do wish, if you are go-

ing to take me to any more teas, you would let me carry my own sandwich in a paper bag. I get very hungry, and it would be a comfort to have something to munch on, while you women are eyeing each others' best hats."

"Have a chocolate, dear!" Betty waved her box invitingly.

"Thank you, several. There is the mail! Get up, Betty girl. I want to see what there is for us, to-night."

He came back to toss half-a-dozen letters into the lap of his wife. Then he sat down across the room and buried himself in the morning papers. Betty, meanwhile, had settled herself on the rug again, her elbows on her knees, her chin in the palms of her hands.

"Mamma, why does Aunt Babe dislike Mrs. Van Hicks?" she asked, after a thoughtful interval.

"What is it, Betty?" Mrs. Farrington's tone was absent, and she was frowning over a letter in her hand.

Her husband looked up.

"What now, Teddy?" he asked, for he knew the tone.

"The old story. This time, they want to make me into a souvenir spoon. What were you asking, Betty?"

Betty strengthened her phrase.

"What makes Aunt Phebe hate Mrs. Van Hicks so much?"

"Hate is a strong word, Betty."

Betty refused to be suppressed.

"Aunt Babe feels strongly. She called her an old pelican, to-day. I don't see why, when Mrs. Van Hicks likes her so much and has such lots of nice things."

Theodora started to open another letter; then she changed her mind and allowed the letter to drop back into her lap.

"Mrs. Van Hicks is a good woman; but—she isn't just our kind, Betty," she concluded a little lamely, as she met the gaze of the honest brown eyes.

"She has more money than we have, ever so much more than Uncle Giff," Betty remarked bluntly.

"Yes, that is the trouble. She has more money than she knows what to do with. Mrs. Van Hicks hasn't been rich long enough to know what money is good for."

"She spends it like everything, though,"

the girl retorted, as she picked up a fallen brand. "Her diamonds are magnificent."

"I know, and she wears them all, when she goes down on the beach," Theodora answered a little sharply, for she had even less admiration than her outspoken sister for Mrs. Van Hicks. "It isn't the money that counts, Betty."

"You like it, though."

"Yes; not for the money, but for the things I can do with it. People with money can study and travel and make themselves a great deal more interesting, because they don't have to tire themselves with working and scrimping. The money alone doesn't make any difference."

"I don't know—" Betty was beginning; but her mother interrupted her.

"Can't you see any difference, Betty, between Mrs. Van Hicks and Cousin Cis? Cousin Cicely works hard to earn less money in a year than Mrs. Van Hicks wastes, every month. That doesn't make Cousin Cis any less the lady; does it?"

"Oh, no; she knows things." Betty's tone had an accent of finality which was not altogether respectful to Mrs. Van Hicks. Then

she lapsed into silence again, her eyes fixed on the fire, while Theodora, satisfied with the point she had made, returned to her letters. She had learned that, with Betty, her wisest course lay in suggesting ideas and leaving the girl to work out her own applications.

"What about Mrs. Van Hicks?" she asked, when her last letter had been read and passed over to her husband.

"She came over here, since supper, to see you. She says her great-nephew, or her grand-nephew, or whatever you call him, is coming, to-morrow night, and she wants to know when our boys will get here. He lives in Chicago, and she is afraid he will find it stupid here. He is fifteen, she says, just the right age for me, and he likes the girls."

Theodora frowned. She frowned again, ten minutes later, when Betty asked rather inconsequently,—

"Mamma, when will my new blue muslin be finished?"

"Ted!" Mr. Farrington looked up from his paper, when Betty had gone to bed. "Teddy, that daughter of ours is growing up."

"I'd like to punch that woman, Billy," his wife answered wrathfully.

CHAPTER THREE

"YES, we have decided to let the boys go East, this summer," Mrs. Holden had written, in May. "The sea air will do Mac good; he has never been quite as strong since he had typhoid. He is a dear fellow, steady as a clock, and I think he will keep Harold in order, so you needn't have too much care of him. If he does get too pranky, send him home by the first train. But the boys will only go to you on condition that the Farrington family come back with them. Do you realize that you have never been here since Betty was born? Give up your next trip to Europe, and come to Montana instead."

And this was the way it came about that, one night in July, the middle section of the sleeper *Nokomis* was occupied by two boys who were craning their necks for the first glimpse of the lights of Chicago.

At four years old, McAlister Holden had been a tow-headed imp whose fertile little

brain could plot iniquities even faster than his restless little body could execute them. At nineteen, by some strange freak of nature, the irrepressible youngster had developed into a strong, quiet fellow, who was his mother's right-hand man, an efficient substitute for his father during Mr. Holden's long absences from home. He was good to look at, broad-shouldered and blond as a Viking, with steady blue eyes and close-shut lips which betrayed his gentle birth. In temperament, he was the own child of his grandfather, still a famous doctor in spite of his seventy years; and it had long been an established fact that Mac was to follow in his profession.

"But he's not so sound as he looks, Hope," the doctor had said on the day he left Montana, the winter before. "Let him lie off for a year or two, and vegetate. It won't hurt him; he is naturally studious, and Archie can keep him busy. I don't want him to be a doctor, unless he is a good one, and a good doctor must have a cast-iron constitution. There is no need for my namesake to hurry through his education."

Meanwhile, the mantle of Mac's mischief appeared to have fallen upon his brother, five

years younger than himself. Slight and dark and lithe as a little monkey, Harold Holden was in a perpetual state of ebullition. From the day he had nearly broken up his kindergarten by assuring the parents of his friends that the teacher had scarlet fever and her mercury was at three hundred and nine, up to the day of his starting East, when he had added the bill of a theatrical company to the choice collection of labels on Mac's suit-case, it was never safe to predict just what Harold would do next. His conscience was still rudimentary; but his digestion and his sense of fun both were fully developed.

Seated next the window, he pushed back his cap and put his feet up on the opposite cushion.

"Awful slow train!" he remarked, with a yawn.

"Forty miles an hour," Mac returned, looking at his watch. "We aren't due for half an hour yet."

"Maybe not. I hate these plains; I wish we could jump straight from the mountains to the seashore. What should make anybody live in this forsaken region? Not an anthill in sight!"

"To provide eating places between New York and the Missouri River," Mac suggested languidly. "I suppose somebody has to do it."

"Might as well live in an alkali desert and done with it," Harold grumbled.

But Mac was pointing to a distant glare reflected on the clouds that hung low above it.

"Chicago!" he said briefly.

"Jove! It looks pretty. It means supper, too. It's our last change before we get to New York; isn't it? I wish I were at The Savins."

"You'll be eating dinner there, day after tomorrow. Don't you want to see grandpa, though?" Mac's tone was charged with enthusiasm, for Dr. McAlister had been his hero from the day he had received his first spanking at the hands of his grandfather for whittling the professional desk with the professional scalpel. Only the mighty ones of the earth had such sharp knives and such heavy hands; only the generous ones could forget their wrath and take small sinners into their arms afterwards to explain why the punishment had fallen.

But Harold had other ideals.

"Uncle Allyn is the fellow for me. I wish he were going to be there," he returned, while he gathered up his overcoat and his caddy bag, though the city lights had not yet begun to detach themselves from the general glare.

Refreshed by a large supper and a stroll about the brilliant streets, the boys were ready enough to resume their journey; yet they lingered on the platform until the signal for starting came. Accordingly, when at last they entered the car, they were confronted with a double line of drawn curtains, and they went to bed, still speculating as to the probable number and nature of their fellow-travellers.

It seemed to Mac that he had but just fallen asleep, when he was roused by something brushing his face. He opened his eyes to see Harold's head peering down over the edge of the upper berth, and Harold's belt swinging to and fro above his nose.

"Mac! Are you awake?"

"Yes. What in thunder do you want?"

"Hark! There's an orchestra opposite."

Mac listened to the resounding snores.

"He appears to be having a bad attack," he observed. "How long has it been going on?"

"Forever, I should say. It waked me, and

I felt selfish to have it all to myself, so I waked you up. I wish Uncle Giff were here."

"It would give him some new ideas. By Jove, there's the worst one yet! He'll break something, if he keeps on at this rate."

Both boys chuckled. Then Mac pushed aside the curtains, for an unmistakable "Hullo!" had fallen upon their ears. From the opposite upper berth, a boyish head was stuck out between the curtains, the brown hair wildly tousled, the grey eyes glowing with merriment.

"Say, you fellows," the stranger demanded tersely; "got anything to tickle with?"

Harold's eyes rested for a moment on the edge of his curtain. The next moment, he had fastened a bit of the fringe to the end of his belt and swung the belt across the car. The opposite head nodded gratefully and vanished between the curtains. The snores below lasted for a time, for just about the proper time, as Harold reckoned it, for a bit of fringe to be focused upon any particular object. Then there was a mighty sneeze, a yawn or two, and once more it became possible to hear the monotonous rumbling of the train.

Behind their curtains, the next morning, Mac and Harold waked early and, in cautious whispers, fell to discussing their opposite neighbor. From the data at their command, a tousled head and an aversion to snores, it was impossible to determine whether or not he would be an agreeable travelling companion. However, he was something young and masculine, and they hoped for the best. Anything would be a relief from the party of Vermont spinsters that had surrounded them in the *Nokomis*.

"Isn't this your belt?"

Mac had just emerged from between the curtains. He found himself confronted by a boy of fifteen, tousled no longer, and with a frank, homely, freckled face. His dress and accent showed that he was a gentleman; Harold's belt in his hand was enough to identify him, and Mac responded cordially.

"It belongs to my young brother. He isn't out yet, so I'll take it."

But Harold's head thrust itself between the curtains.

"Here, hand over! You did us all a good turn, last night."

"Look out! He's awake in there," the

stranger warned him, and Harold's head vanished. It reappeared again, however, to ask,—

"What's the matter with our all going in to breakfast together? I'll be ready in a minute."

Nothing appeared to be the matter, unless it might have been the length of Harold's minute. When at last he came forth, fresh-starched and immaculate, the boys rushed to the dining-car where they were soon talking like old friends.

"Then you are going through to New York?" Mac said interrogatively, as he broke his third roll.

"Yes, I'm on a penitential pilgrimage, bound for some sort of a hole on the seashore. The fact is," the boy laughed frankly; "I'm speculating in futures, this summer."

"What?"

"Yes, speculating is about the right word for it," he answered shrewdly. "Anyhow, I hate the whole business. My mother has an old Aunt Persis who has some money, and she insisted that I should be named for her. I did my best to get out of it by being a boy; but the old lady wouldn't abandon her claim, and I had to be Percival. Percival! If they

had asked my advice, I'd have told them to let the money go, and give me a civilized name. She has never seen me since I was a year old; but, this summer, she heard that my people were going abroad, so she ordered me to make her a visit. Goods sent on approval, you see. I know I sha'n't like her; she has a Roman nose and plays solitaire games. This summer, she has taken a cottage at Quantuck, and I'm to stay there till school opens."

"Quantuck!" Mac and Harold exclaimed in the same breath.

"Yes. Know the place?"

"We are going there, ourselves."

"Good! What is it like?"

"Mac has been there before. I haven't," Harold answered.

"Do you like it?"

Mac's mouth was full, but he nodded enthusiastically.

"How large is it?"

"Not large at all. You could pack it into one corner of Jackson Park."

"Good boating?"

"No."

"Tennis?"

"I didn't see any."

"Good roads?"

"One; but it is only seven miles long."

"Is it pretty?"

"It's—queer."

Percival eyed Mac askance.

"What in thunder is it good for, then?"

"Why, I don't know. It's—it's Quantuck. The surf is fine, and there is the little grey village not like anything else in the world, and the moors, and ——"

"What is there for a fellow to do?"

"Swim."

"Can't."

"There's a swimming master, a good one."

"M—m. Well, what else?"

"Golf."

"Slow."

"Walking."

"Life not long enough."

Mac ransacked his brain for words in which to express the nameless charm of Quantuck. Then he gave up the attempt.

"Wait till you have been there a week," was his vague advice.

Twilight was falling over Town, two days later, when Percival Ainslee walked across from the wharf to the station. It had been a

rough day on the water, and he was not a good sailor. Now his manner was dejected enough, as he entered the station and asked for a ticket to Quantuck.

"How long does it take to go across?" he inquired listlessly.

"About three-quarters of an hour."

"What? I thought—— How far is it?"

"Seven miles."

Born in swiftly-moving Chicago, he gasped at the words. Then he rallied.

"How soon does the train go out?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know?"

"No; we don't know just where the train is."

"Have you mislaid it somewhere?" he asked, with the sarcasm of the new arrival who knows not the habits of the Quantuck train.

The man in the office eyed him commiseratingly.

"Guess you must be new around here," he remarked. Then he explained himself. "They telephoned over from Quantuck that the train left there at five. 'Tain't here yet, so it must have broken down somewhere out on the moors. It will get round by and by."

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In disgust, Percival looked about him. The other people who had come over on the boat were waiting tranquilly, and he judged it well to wait tranquilly also. The station was smaller than the travelling public, so he went outside, put his suit-case on one end and sat himself down upon it. After an apparently endless interval, while he amused himself by throwing stones into the puddle at his feet, he heard a distant asthmatic whistle. The whistle came nearer; there was the clatter of a little bell, and then there came sliding down the track towards him an engine, cab foremost, and a brace of little yellow cars like piano boxes, followed by one diminutive open car apparently strayed from some off-island trolley line. It was the Quantuck train, the derision of the stranger, but the joy of him who knows and loves the ways of old Quantuck. Moreover, as an unusual number of people were due at Quantuck, that night, the entire rolling stock of the road had been sent to meet them. Small wonder that the engine had proved unequal to the strain and had broken down, as she tried to toil up the grade at Kidd's Treasure!

Twice, three times, Percival walked the length of the train.

"Boiler hooped like a leaky barrel!" he soliloquized. "Cars half a yard long, and no springs to speak of! Bell stolen from somebody's cow!" Then gloomily he mounted the steps, entered the car and went jolting away across the moors.

It seemed to him that he had jolted half around the world when, far away at the left, he began to catch glimpses of a wonderful flashing light which shot a golden beam across the summer darkness and made the stars look pale by comparison. Then a tiny huddle of lights showed itself, and the engine shrieked exultantly, as it went sliding down the grade into Quantuck. The bell clattered madly; the last whiff of steam died away in the whistle, and Percival Ainslee stepped out of the car to be met by a majestical aunt with a Roman nose, and with a stout pug dog under her arm.

CHAPTER FOUR

AT least three times a day, the Farringtons and the Barretts were wont to exchange congratulations that even the narrow road separated their cottages from Traümerei. Traümerei was the abiding-place of Mrs. Van Hicks, and Mrs. Van Hicks disliked wading through the dust of Quantuck roadways. Accordingly, by abandoning the windows and verandas on the side of Traümerei, they saved themselves as much as possible from contact with their neighbor, although Mrs. Barrett declared that, spider-like, she lay in wait for their incomings and their outgoings, ready to pounce upon them in case they appeared.

There was nothing actually bad about Mrs. Van Hicks. It was only that, as Theodora had implied, her wealth had expanded faster than her social evolution. The late Mr. Hicks had accumulated gold by means of tinned meats; he had left his widow in possession of a fortune which seemed to her to justify the

addition of a Van to her name. She was a kindly, selfish, underbred woman, who attempted to win for herself friends by means of the baldest flatteries, and she had chosen Mrs. Farrington and the Barretts as her own especial prey. She asked for Theodora's autograph, the first time they met, and she coupled her request with a vague reference to the fact that Theodora wrote stories for school books, although all Quantuck, that summer, was reading *In the Harvest Moon.* It took her two days longer to discover that Mr. Barrett was a composer of broad reputation. When she did find it out, she promptly begged him to play to her. As no way of escape presented itself, Gifford Barrett complied. She beat time with her foot while he played *Anitra's Tanz*, laughed heartily at her pug who howled a lusty accompaniment and then, after the closing phrase, congratulated him upon being able to compose such a pretty piece.

"But you have no right to object to that," Mrs. Barrett said vengefully, one day. "If you will do things, you must expect people to be foolish about you. Your talents, if you have any, are for the public. My cheek is my own peculiar property, and she has no busi-

ness to dig her forefinger into imaginary dimples there. She calls me 'my dear,' too, and that is an insult to my intelligence."

Quantuck is so small that even incongruous people are forced into close quarters; but they avoided Mrs. Van Hicks when they could, sneaking in and out of their back doors, rather than face the veranda of Traümerei where Mrs. Van Hicks sat with her pug and played her interminable games of fan tan against an imaginary opponent. She had endeavored to train the pug to sit in a chair opposite her; but he had preferred to clamber up on the table and hunt fleas all over her outspread cards, so she had given up the attempt.

"What manner of youth can her grand-nephew be?" Phebe asked grimly, the next morning, as she and Theodora strolled down to the beach. "She is making great plans for 'our young people,' as she calls them, and she will probably encourage the intimacy to the last degree. If the youth takes after her, I pity our boys."

"I could forgive everything else, if she only would let Betty alone," Theodora answered. "All her life, I have been trying to have the child keep her sweet unconsciousness, and now

Mrs. Van Hicks tells her that she is pretty and bright and all that, and is filling her head with nonsense about boys. I have forbidden Betty to go there; but I can't forbid Mrs. Van Hicks to come to the Lodge. Oh, Babe, be thankful that your children are boys! I have ideals for my little girl; but it is so hard to carry them out." Theodora's tone was despondent.

"Betty is all right," Mrs. Barrett said consolingly.

"Yes, now; but I want her to stay so. She is so large and so pretty that I can't keep her a child much longer; but I am determined that she shall not be a society girl at sixteen. Billy feels as I do; we both were glad to have Mac and Harold here for her to play with. Boys, the right kind of them, are better for her than girls, at this age. They keep her out of doors, and make her forget her clothes and her company manners. But this youthful Van Hicks——" She paused expressively.

"He's no Van Hicks," Phebe returned, stopping short in the midst of the sand dune she was erecting beside her.

"What is he?"

"Percival Ainslee." Phebe's accent was scathing. "His very name is a handicap.

There might be a chance for a plain Jim Grimes; but what can you expect of grand-nephew of Mrs. Van Hicks, who is named Percival Ainslee!" And Phebe added emphasis to her words by levelling her sand dune.

Betty, meanwhile, both could and did expect great things of Percival Ainslee. The name caught her fancy; it suggested the invalid hero of one of Miss Yonge's stories. Moreover, the Van Hicks connection failed to repel her. She had never before seen any one quite like the fan-tan lady, as Mrs. Barrett had dubbed their neighbor, and she was too young to appreciate the woman's inherent vulgarity. Childlike, she had an appetite for sweets; she swallowed with relish the compliments which Mrs. Van Hicks showered upon her, and recognized only the clumsy kindliness of the woman. Moreover, it had been left for Mrs. Van Hicks to give Betty her first inkling that boys were something other than boon companions, so it was with a new feeling of self-consciousness that Betty awaited the arrival of Percival Ainslee.

It was quite dark when the train reached Quantuck, that night, and the keen eyes peering out from an upper window of the Lodge

could make out nothing but the outlines of Mrs. Van Hicks and her nephew, as they came up the street towards Traümerei. Betty was denied even the pleasure of listening to their voices, for conversation appeared to be at a standstill between them, and only the wheezing of Adonis, the pug, broke the stillness of the summer night. She watched until she saw the lights gleam from the upper windows of the cottage; for one moment, she had the satisfaction of seeing the guest, shoes in hand, silhouetted upon one of the drawn shades. Then the lights went out, and, the show over, Betty tucked herself into bed.

"Here, Adonis, you brute, stand yourself still!"

In the early morning silence, the voice broke in upon Betty's dreams. She rubbed her eyes and stared vaguely at the ceiling for a minute; then she sprang up and went flying to the window. On the veranda of the cottage across the road, Adonis was waddling solemnly about, in smug satisfaction over the bow of green cambric tied to the innermost curl of his tail. Sitting on the steps was a boy, a healthy, homely, unremarkable boy whom Betty reluctantly identified as the grand-

nephew of Mrs. Van Hicks. While she watched him, he yawned in such leisurely fashion that she could see two rows of hard white teeth. Then the teeth closed with a snap.

"Well, this is a festive sort of place, Mr. Venus," he remarked to the dog. "No; don't snore. I don't like snoring. In fact, I think I don't like you; you aren't any prettier to look at than this forsaken street. You are a good deal broader than the street, Mr. Venus. Let's go to walk, and see if you can squeeze between the houses." He chirruped invitingly, and Adonis, his tail still decorated, trudged away at his heels.

Mrs. Farrington always insisted that her daughter should be immaculate, so, at the breakfast table, it passed without comment that Betty was arrayed in crisp pink gingham in place of the rough cheviot skirt she generally wore. As soon as breakfast was over, the girl took her book and started for the beach. She had learned that new arrivals at Quantuck rarely waited for the noon bathing hour before going to the beach, and she was anxious to get a nearer view of Master Percival Ainslee.

Under the awning, she piled up a hummock of sand; then she settled herself with her back against it and took up her book. Before she had read five pages, however, the book dropped from her listless hand, and she sat dreamily looking away up the broad strip of beach.

Quantuck beach is long with a longness which catches the eye and appeals to the imagination. It sweeps away to the north and south, curving gently until it rounds behind the cliff, and one instinctively thinks of it as stretching on and on forever, a broad stripe of sand and beach grass, dotted here and there with a dory drawn up above the reach of the waves. Just opposite the old village, a line of awnings marks the spot where the beach life centres itself. Otherwise, the beach is unbroken, and along its whole sweep the waves roll up and fall in all their native glory.

At that early hour, the beach was deserted. The place was ablaze, that morning, for the sun made everything glitter, the silver beach grass, and the golden sand, and the tossing, dancing waves of vivid emerald and sapphire, crested with opalescent foam. Betty snuggled down contentedly against her sand pillow and

reflected that it was good to be alive. Then she straightened up suddenly, for a step was heard behind her. The next minute, a boy passed her and walked down to the edge of the sand.

For ten feet above the spot where the breakers curl over, the beach slopes upward at a sharp angle, and then stretches landward in a broad, level expanse. Sometimes the waves break and crawl only a little way up the slope; sometimes they sweep over the crest and rush forward to cause a stampede among the awnings. The only safe prediction concerning them is that the next wave will do something quite unlike what any of its predecessors have done.

With his hands in his pockets and his hair blowing in the stiff breeze, the boy stood for a few minutes at the crest of the slope, looking out over the dazzling water. For the moment, the waves were plashing gently, some distance away. He watched them; then, with the boldness of one accustomed only to the ways of still water, he walked down the slope and stooped to dabble his fingers in the incoming wave. It was literally an incoming wave, and it raced with the boy until they

both were far past the top of the slope. The wave came off conqueror. With a gurgling laugh, it sank away into the sand, while the boy looked regretfully down at his drenched shoes and stockings.

"Oh, hang!" he said concisely.

From the awning near by, there came a little ripple of irrepressible laughter. He flushed to the roots of his hair, as he glanced over his shoulder. He hesitated; then he turned and walked directly towards the awning.

"You needn't laugh at a fellow," he said bluntly. "How could I tell what your beastly waves would do?"

"It wasn't the water; it was because you looked so disgusted," Betty returned, with equal bluntness. "Nobody here ever goes over the edge, unless he has on a bathing suit. You might have known you'd get wet."

"I don't see how, if nobody told me." He turned abruptly on his heel and stalked away up the narrow board walk in search of dry shoes.

When he had vanished, Betty clasped her hands in dramatic resignation.

"Well, of all the bears!" she said aloud. "If that is Percival Ainslee, I don't want to

see any more of him. He hasn't any better manners than Adonis, and he's as homely as—" her eyes roved about her for a simile; "as one of those pop-eyed sand fleas. The idea of his speaking to me! Anybody would have laughed at him." She rose and tucked her book under her arm with an air of great decision. "And to think of my prinking for the benefit of that object! He can take care of himself, and his auntie can take care of him, for all me. Look at his great, dripping tracks! Clumsy!" And she departed in search of her Aunt Phebe, to acquaint her with the impression created by the new arrival.

"Betty, dear?"

It was late afternoon and, down on the beach, Betty and Paul Barrett were playing tit-tat-to in the sand. At the call, Betty, fresh, rosy and wind-blown, sat up on her heels and looked around. She saw Mrs. Van Hicks and Adonis bearing down upon her, both breathing heavily from the exertion of wading through the deep sand. In the lee of Mrs. Van Hicks waded the grand-nephew.

"Betty dear, this is my nephew, Percival Ainslee. Percy, I want you to know Betty

Farrington, for she is one of the sweetest girls in Quantuck."

At this remarkable outburst, Betty blushed furiously, while she brushed the hair out of her eyes and scrambled to her feet. Percival bowed frigidly and muttered a sulky greeting.

"I have been looking, all day long, for a glimpse of you," Mrs. Van Hicks went on. "I want you to help make it pleasant for my dear boy."

The dear boy looked far from pleasant just then. Betty eyed him mischievously, as he stood with his shoulder half turned towards her.

"I think we saw each other, this morning," she said graciously.

"Oh, did you? I thought you weren't down here at the bathing hour."

"I wasn't. Your nephew took his bath early, and I happened to be under our awning. Won't you sit down with my cousin and me, and have a game?" she added, turning to Percival.

"Thank you, no. I must write a letter."

"Too bad! We'll try it, some other time. Yes, Mrs. Van Hicks, my mother is at home;

you will find her there, I am sure." And Betty returned to her game with Paul, apparently quite regardless of the boyish figure stamping up the beach.

CHAPTER FIVE

"BUT, you see, I don't like to be laughed at."

"Then you shouldn't make yourself ridiculous," Betty replied coolly.

It was the first time in his life that any girl had hinted that Percival Ainslee could be ridiculous. His back stiffened at the words.

"I can't see how I made myself ridiculous, just by not knowing how the waves act here."

Betty laughed again at the recollection.

"I don't know as it was your fault," she said, with dangerous frankness. "You had had too many trumpets blown in your honor, and I expected something wonderful. Your name alone was enough for that. I suppose you aren't to blame, if you can't live up to it. But really, after all that Mrs. Van Hicks had said about you, it was very ignominious of you to get ducked, the first time you appeared on the beach. And then you were so wrathful."

"I was not wrathful. You were, though."

"Good reason why! You had no business to speak to me as you did."

"You had no business to laugh at me."

"You were so funny."

"You were horridly rude."

For the moment, war clouds gathered around them. Then Betty laughed out blithely.

"What is the use of our fighting?" she exclaimed. "Your aunt has ordered you to ask my mother to let me walk to the lighthouse with you. We can't help ourselves, so we may as well make the best of it. If we hurry, it needn't take so very long."

Instead of hurrying, Percival sat himself down in a blueberry patch and turned to face her.

"Oh, I say!" he protested.

"You'd better get up. There are ticks there," Betty interposed hastily.

"What's that?"

"Things that get under the skin and suck, and, when you pull them out, they break off," she explained lucidly.

"Let them. I want to talk," he returned, as he offered her a handful of berries. "Sit down, for I've a good deal to say, and we might as well fight it out."

"What's the use?" Betty demanded.

"It isn't my fault we fight; it's my aunt's," Percival observed argumentatively, after a pause which he devoted to the berries. "She told me a lot about you, what a sweet girl you were and all that, how you were looking forward to my coming, and——"

"What? Me? I?" Betty's tone was indignant.

"Hold on a minute! Don't flare up till I finish. I don't like sweet girls, and I was afraid you were going to be one. When I found you watching me and laughing at me, I didn't like you."

"Oh!" And Betty laughed once more, this time at his implied statement that she was not a sweet girl.

"Then you made fun of me again, that afternoon on the beach. No wonder I didn't like you. My aunt made me think you were a dressed-up Miss Manners."

Betty looked at him during a moment of thoughtful silence.

"Ditto," she said gravely.

"But I never fought with any other girl," he argued.

Without turning her head, Betty raised her brows inquiringly.

"Have you known very many?" she asked.

"Yes, and I could always get on well enough with them."

"Well, I can't help it," she returned. "Neither do I fight with many people; but we appear to be perfectly capable of fighting with each other. Let's have a truce, just for this one afternoon."

They were on their way up the cliff to the lighthouse. It was as Betty had said. In the hearing of them all, Mrs. Van Hicks had ordered Percival to ask Mrs. Farrington to allow her daughter to walk to the lighthouse with him. During the three days since Percival's arrival, the two young people had seen as little as possible of each other. When they did meet, Percival had been indifferent, Betty aggressive. However, three days of acute homesickness had brought the boy down from his high horse, and in his secret heart he was glad of the obtuseness which had led his aunt to send him out on this pilgrimage. It was better to fight than to be bored. Moreover, he had been boiled on the beach, that morning, just as Betty was swimming past the spot

where he was trying to launch himself through the breakers; and, the afternoon before, a treacherous sandy rut had landed himself and his bicycle directly in the path of her front wheel. Percival Ainslee had never been used to girls who rode and swam like boys, who went bareheaded in all weathers and who ignored his presence until their attention was specifically called to it. It ruffled his pride a little; but he was no milksop, and, on the whole, he rather liked the new type.

On her own side, Betty was quite sincere. If Percival had been the beautiful, languid youth her fancy had painted him, she might have taken to heart the words of Mrs. Van Hicks, and posed for his benefit. As it was, he seemed to her like a hundred other boys, with the doubtful addition of an undoubted bad temper. She was quite unable to explain why it was that he antagonized her; yet, from the hour of their meeting on the beach, she had felt irritated and baffled by him and altogether unlike her usual merry self. She had sulked palpably, all the first of their walk up the cliff, and it was not until they had fallen to squabbling that she manifested even a hostile interest in her companion.

"How do you like Quantuck?" she asked abruptly, after an interval.

"Don't."

"I don't see why not." Betty loved Quantuck, and her tone was slightly haughty.

"Nothing for a fellow to do."

"There's everything to do. The boys are up to something, all the time."

"Don't know them."

"Get acquainted."

"What's the use?" he returned, with a bravado he was far from feeling. Already he realized the disadvantage of being the grand-nephew of Mrs. Van Hicks, who was so unlike his dainty, well-bred little mother. In his inmost soul he hated his grand-aunt; but he was too loyal to admit the fact to a comparative stranger. "I met some fine fellows in the train, coming on, who are going to get here, next week."

"Have they been here before?" Betty asked more amicably. She had been shrewd enough to recognize the ring of homesickness in her companion's tone, and she suddenly felt rather sorry for him. After all, it must be forlorn to be a stranger in a place like Quantuck where most of the people were on friendly terms.

"One had, the older one. They were brothers."

A sudden suspicion of the truth crossed Betty's mind.

"Who was he? Perhaps I know him. Did he tell you his name?"

"They were Mac and Harold Holden, from somewhere in Montana. Mac was the one who had been here before."

"How do you like them?" she inquired, as she stooped to pick a spray of wild roses.

"First-rate!" It was the only touch of enthusiasm the boy had shown. Under its influence he seemed to her tenfold more agreeable. "We were together, all one day, and I never saw finer fellows."

Betty nodded in grave approval.

"I'm glad you liked them. It would have hurt my feelings, if you hadn't, for they are my cousins and they're coming to the Lodge, next Tuesday."

Leaving the blueberry patch, they strolled onward along the narrow footpath on the edge of the cliff. The sea was eighty feet below them, all green and grey under the cloudy sky. Before them rose the huge shaft of the lighthouse, and at their left stretched the

lovely Quantuck moors, velvety and treeless and rolling away in a succession of low hillocks where the quail led her young from the nest in friendly disregard of the grazing cattle and the occasional creak of a passing box-cart.

"Look!" Betty said imperatively.

Following her pointing finger, the boy looked backward across the moorland to the huddle of grey cottages and, beyond, to the bold outline of Kidd's Treasure. His grey eyes dilated, and he nodded slightly. That was all; but Betty was satisfied.

"Now we'll go up the light," she said briskly. "Can you climb?"

She led the way, running lightly up the spiral staircase, leaving Percival to follow with the old assistant keeper whose time-worn explanation was so stale in her ears. They found her in the lantern, staring dreamily upward at the shining lenses.

"A steady light for twenty miles," the guide was droning; "and a flash visible for forty."

"Oh, we know all that, Captain Macy," she interrupted him impatiently. "Look up and see the round middle spot that makes the flash. And think of sitting here, night after night,

while the weight runs down and the lantern turns round, and the storm beats on the ships, 'way off on the water! And think of the sailors lost in the storm, when they see the flash and recognize it!" She pulled herself up abruptly. "Please wind up the clockwork a little. Then we must go home."

Dazzled by the strong light above, Percival felt as if he were stepping into absolute darkness, as he led the way down the staircase again. Half-way to the ground, Betty heard a thud and a quick exclamation.

"Did you fall?" she called.

"Yes, I slipped off a step and went down."

"Are you hurt?" There was a rising note of alarm in her voice.

"No. Come along!" he answered shortly.

She wished she dared advise him to keep his temper; but she prudently refrained. Later, she was glad that she had done so, for, when they came out into the clear daylight again, she saw that the boy's face was greyish white.

"What is it?" she demanded.

"Nothing."

"It is. You are white as can be. You hurt yourself, I know."

"I strained my wrist a little," he confessed

reluctantly. "It saved me from falling the rest of the way down the stairs, though. It won't amount to much. Let's hurry home." But in spite of his brave words, he stopped speaking and shut his teeth.

All the way home, he seemed unconscious of the fact that Betty was panting, as she trotted along the narrow path, vainly trying to keep pace with his stride. He made no complaint. He even drew an occasional laugh from his companion by some quaint comment upon passing objects; but Betty was unfeignedly thankful when they came into the village once more. At the Lodge, Percival hesitated for a moment; then suddenly he sat down on the steps and rested his head against the corner of the house.

"Mamma!" Betty's voice was sharp with fear, for he had turned so white that she thought he was going to faint.

Theodora appeared in the doorway, with Mrs. Barrett at her side, and Betty hurriedly explained the situation.

"A tumble? I'm so sorry, Percival." Theodora's tone was at once merry and comforting, as she dropped down on the step and put a strong arm around the boy. "What is it?

The wrist? Babe, this is in your line. Mrs. Barrett started to be a doctor, Percival; but Mr. Barrett insisted upon her marrying him, instead. She has three boys of her own, though, and they keep her in practice. Let her see what the trouble is."

Regardless of her dignity, Phebe seated herself on the ground at Percival's feet and took his wrist in her hand. As she did so, she noticed the strong, slim fingers and the fine skin of the boy's hand, and she contrasted it with the pudgy, broad-nailed paws of Mrs. Van Hicks.

"Nothing is broken," she said cheerily, after a few experiments on the injured wrist. "You probably have strained some of the ligaments a little. That kind of thing hurts worse than a break, and you have had good pluck to bear it. Ted, I want some old linen. Betty, run over and ask Uncle Giff for the liniment bottle on the third shelf on the east side of my window."

"Let me go."

Both women liked the courtesy which prompted the boy to rise; but Theodora gently pushed him back again.

"No; you must play invalid for a little longer. My sister isn't through with you yet.

When she gets you patched up, I want you to come in and sprawl on our couch till supper time. Your aunt has driven to Town, and you are better off here, anyway."

"It's a horrid sprain, Ted," Mrs. Barrett said, when she was alone with her sister. "It may lay him up for all summer. It would have been ever so much better if he had only broken it; but people are so inconsiderate, when they are falling down-stairs. I can't help liking the boy for his grit and for a certain courtesy he has. His family must be superior to the fan-tan lady."

Later that evening, Percival had gone home, and the Farringtons and the Barretts were sitting before the fire in the Lodge, when Mrs. Van Hicks swept in upon them.

"Where is dear Mrs. Barrett?" she demanded. "You can't think how grateful I am for all you did for my dear Percival!" Before Phebe could fathom her intention and dodge, the fan-tan lady had bent down and imprinted a kiss on her cheek. "It was so good of you, so like you! I do hope you won't be offended, if I offer you——" Even the irrepressible Mrs. Van Hicks faltered, as she met Phebe's indignant stare. Then she changed her tone.

"Isn't it unfortunate? Here I am, not strong enough to bear any anxiety. I came here just for rest, and I never dreamed that Percival could do such a thing. He must have been very careless. And now he will need ever so much done for him. I think I'd better send him away, after a day or two."

But Phebe had risen. She stood facing Mrs. Van Hicks, and now she uttered an indescribable sound, a veritable snort of hostility.

"It is quite unnecessary, Mrs. Van Hicks," she said haughtily. "The boy will suffer a good deal for a time, and his wrist will need care; but, of course, I never expected that you would give it to him. If you will send him over to me, two or three times a day, I shall be only too glad to help him."

For a moment, Mrs. Van Hicks quailed. Then she said hurriedly,—

"Thank you, I will. Good-night."

Silence fell upon the Lodge after she had gone. Then Mrs. Farrington said,—

"Phebe!"

"I'm glad I done it," Phebe replied pugnaciously. "What's more, I'll do it again, if I choose."

CHAPTER SIX

THE next Tuesday night brought Mac and Harold to the Lodge. Betty and her father met them at the train; but, in the flurry of greeting, none of them thought to mention Percival Ainslee. Accordingly, both the boys were somewhat astonished, when they reached the Lodge, to discover their travelling acquaintance of the week before, stretched out in the hammock at Mrs. Farrington's side.

"Glad to see you," he remarked affably. "I am pleased to welcome you to the Lodge. Look out there! That wrist is lame," he added, as the boys descended upon him in enthusiastic greeting.

Theodora, during the past week, had been learning the full meaning of boyish devotion. Phebe had been as good as her word in assuming the care of Percival's wrist. Moved partly by a perverse pleasure in snubbing Mrs. Van Hicks, partly by a genuine liking for

Mrs. Van Hicks's grand-nephew, she had taken the boy under her protection and made him free of her medicine chest and her cookie box. In return, Percival felt a hearty gratitude and admiration for her; but he reserved his whole adoration for Theodora, and he gladly deserted the others, whenever Mrs. Farrington came in sight. He showed his liking in countless ways, half shyly at first; then, as he became more sure of his ground, he openly established himself as Mrs. Farrington's footman, until her husband was moved to protest that there was nothing left for him to do.

For a day or two, Mrs. Farrington watched the boy closely. She had no intention of allowing her young daughter to be on familiar terms with any chance stranger of the Van Hicks type. Apparently she was satisfied with the result of her scrutiny, for Percival was generally to be found at the Lodge, or somewhere near the Farrington awning on the beach. Mrs. Van Hicks mourned a little occasionally that her grand-nephew had so little taste for the joys of solitaire; but, after her fashion, she was a kindly soul. She was unwilling to be troubled by any care of Percival; but she was quite content to have

Percival amuse himself in his own way, doubly content when his own way led him close to the heels of Mrs. Farrington and into an intimacy with that charmed circle which she herself had been powerless to enter.

"Your sister is so young at heart," she observed to Phebe, one day. "It is really wonderful for a woman of her age to care for the companionship of a boy; but I sometimes think she enjoys Percival just as well as she does me."

And Phebe answered enigmatically,—

"Possibly. There is no accounting for tastes."

With the coming of Mac and Harold, a fresh zest seemed to enter into the life at the Lodge. Boyish feet clattered up and down the stairs, boyish voices called from room to room, and, wherever the boys were, Betty was not far off. She liked Harold; but, curiously enough, it was to quiet Mac that she gave her full allegiance, and she followed him about quite as persistently as Percival followed her mother. Most remarkable fact of all, when they disagreed, as they did a dozen times a day, for they both were young persons of vigorous opinion, Betty invariably gave in,

though not always with the best grace in the world.

"There's no use in fighting with you," she said vehemently, one morning. "It is like pounding my head against the awning post. You wait till I am all through talking, and then you say, 'But, Betty, it is.' I can't budge you an inch, so what is the use of wasting my breath?"

Together, then, the two cousins rode and walked and swam. Mac took Betty to the moors and gave her lessons in botany; Betty led Mac from one end of the island to the other and taught him all the ancient lore of the place. While Harold was busy, organizing a ball nine, and Percival, still rather under the weather from his aching wrist, lounged about in Mrs. Farrington's wake, Betty and Mac were exploring the region, until all Quantuck learned that, wherever the blond boy made his appearance, the tawny-haired maiden was not far away.

Then woe fell upon Betty. For several days, she had been conscious of occasional twinges of toothache; but she had wisely held her peace, since she knew that any complaint on her part would bring forth a prompt

suggestion of dentistry. Betty's love of the profession was not great. She had never been able to decide which was worse, the buzz of the borer or the whack of the hammer, the making the hole or the filling it up again, and she was convinced that a mild attack of toothache was preferable to either. However, a long, damp afternoon on the beach settled the matter. Betty appeared at the table, the next morning, with her face swollen out of all semblance of balance or of beauty.

Harold pointed at her derisively.

"Don't you wish you had owned up before, ma'am?" he demanded, for Betty, on the previous evening, had confessed to him something of her plight.

She nodded and tried to laugh; but she was rather a forlorn-looking Betty, and when she left the table, her breakfast was still untasted. Her father followed her out to the veranda where he found her sitting in an abject little heap, her swollen face between her hands.

"I am so sorry for you, dear," he said, as he sat down beside her and pulled her aching head over against his shoulder. "You'd better go over to Town and have Dr. Mitchell look at you."

"Oh, no, papa," she remonstrated.

"You must, Betty. You have been needing some work done for a long time, and Dr. Mitchell is a good man. I want you to go over there, this morning."

Betty nestled her face against his rough coat and snuggled up to him coaxingly.

"It is too late. It must be after nine now."

"This afternoon, then."

Betty's ear was trained to every inflection of her father's voice, and she knew that now there was no appeal. Accordingly, she submitted to the inevitable; but she consoled herself with her dearest expletive,—

"Oh, botheration! Well, if I must. How am I to go?"

"Drive. I am sorry I can't take you; but I have to be here, all day, on the chance of a telegram from the office. Whom do you want?"

"You, of course. Oh, papa, it does ache, and I hate to be babyish," she added, as a fresh twinge brought two great tears into her eyes. "If you really can't go, I want Mac."

"Mac!" Mr. Farrington's voice rang jovially in at the open window.

"Well?" Mac came striding out to the veranda, while Betty hastily brushed away the offending tears.

"This young woman wants you to drive her to Town, this afternoon, to call on the dentist. Can you go?"

"Sure can I! Is it a bad ache, Betty?"

"Horrid; but the dentist is worse than the ache," she answered forlornly. Then the twinge spent itself, and she sat up with sudden perkiness. "I'll tell you what, papa, I'll make a bargain with you. If I will go to the dentist and not scold about it, may we start right away after dinner and, as soon as I get through being killed, drive over to Stormcrest? We can get something to eat in Town, on our way back, and come home by moonlight."

"How about the tooth?" her father asked.

"Oh, it doesn't ache nearly as much as it did. Please, can't we? Mac has never seen the moors in the moonlight, you know."

Her father looked at her doubtfully.

"What do you think about it, Mac?"

"I'd like it, Uncle Billy. What time will you be ready, Betty?"

"You youngsters appear to take it for

granted that I am going to agree to your plan," Mr. Farrington remarked.

"Why, of course," Betty answered blandly. "You go and order the horse, Mac. I will be ready, whenever you say."

During the bathing hour, that noon, Betty had the Lodge to herself. She had kept her pain bravely to herself, all the morning, and it was rather a relief, when the others went to the beach, to curl herself up in the hammock and wail a little. She was destined to have her solitude interrupted, however. She heard a wheezing and puffing in the narrow lane between the Lodge and Valhalla, the Barretts' cottage, and then a voice,—

"Go slow, Mr. Venus. You'll get sunstruck, if you hurry. Portly people should keep quiet in hot weather. Oh, Mr. Venus, this is a hole of a place! Let's go down on the beach."

But Adonis, with a sudden access of intelligence, had discovered Betty in the hammock, and straightway he refused to go to the beach. Instead, he sat himself down on the edge of the veranda and whimpered forth his demand for attention. Percival's eyes followed those of Adonis.

"Why, what's the matter with you?" he demanded. His mood was more sympathetic than the form of his phrase. Until that moment, it had never occurred to him that Betty Farrington could be teary and forlorn; and, in his surprise, he neglected to choose his words with due care.

"Nothing but toothache," she answered tartly, for, from her childhood, Betty had always been prone to regard her illnesses as something of which she ought to be ashamed.

"Oh, that's beastly! Is it a bad one?"

"It isn't exactly what you would call a good one." Betty laughed in spite of herself. "How is your wrist?" she inquired more amicably.

"It isn't. It ached all night long. I'm just looking for Mrs. Barrett now."

"Sorry. Do hurry to get well, so you can do things. Aunt Babe is on the beach." And she nodded in friendly dismissal.

In truth, Percival himself was getting anxious to be able to do things again. At best, Quantuck with Mrs. Van Hicks as his hostess was not his idea of Paradise. She liked the boy and, according to her lights, she was good to him; but they had few interests in common,

and conversation between them died a natural death, a dozen times a day. Moreover, to spend his vacation on the seashore and then of a sudden to be thrown out of most varieties of athletics was exasperating to an energetic youth of fifteen. He was too plucky to complain; but, underneath his sunburn, his face lost something of its roundness, and a little discouraged droop came at the corners of his mouth. Mrs. Farrington and Mrs. Barrett were always kind and cordial to him; but he needed younger friends, and, of all the young people, Mac was the only one who ever had leisure to stop and kill time with him.

With the perversity which always attends the career of an aching tooth, Betty's convalescence began within an hour after she had agreed to go to the dentist, and, by the time Mac and the carriage appeared at the door, she was quite her usual self. From the opposite veranda, Percival watched them rather wishfully.

"You don't suppose we could make room for him; do you?" Mac inquired, as he helped Betty to her seat. "He has been out of most things, since he came down here, and it must be desperately dull for him."

"Oh, we can't," Betty replied with decision. "I hate to ride, three on a seat. He would spoil all the fun, anyway."

In Quantuck, the houses stand very close together. On the opposite veranda, Percival heard the question and the reply, and he turned scarlet. In the living-room of the Lodge, Theodora also heard, and she gave a little sigh. Then, as the carriage drove away, she went out to the steps.

"Percival," she called blithely; "are you willing to escort an old lady like me to Quiddum Pond, this afternoon? I want to drive over after some mallows, and Mr. Farrington can't go with me."

Betty, meanwhile, as she drove away with her cousin, was supremely content, even though her afternoon included the woes of dentistry. The prospect of having Mac all to herself for six or seven hours exhilarated her. The dentist was several miles away, the horse toddled leisurely along, and Betty snuggled against the cushion at Mac's side and freed her mind of the ideas accumulated during her solitary hour in the hammock. Theoretically, her contentment should have been clouded by her conscience, and a pair of wishful grey eyes

ought to have looked reproachfully back at her from every sunshiny patch of moorland on which her own eyes rested. As a matter of fact, nothing of the kind occurred. The idea had not once crossed Betty's mind that Percival had overheard her careless answer to Mac, or that she owed him any particular consideration. She had never been able to discover why it was that she did not like him any better. He was neat, courteous, ready of resource and of wit; but he touched her girlish ideals only in the one respect of bearing pain bravely. She had meant to be friendly to him, when they met; but he usually succeeded in making her wayward and freakish, whether intentionally or not she was at a loss to determine. Since her cousins had come to Quantuck, Percival had seen but little of her. Mac had absorbed her whole time; the mere fact that Percival was a stranger in Quantuck, lonely and in some pain, had not suggested to the energetic girl that it lay within her power to make things more pleasant for him. She was selfish in the matter; but she was serenely unconscious of her own selfishness.

The afternoon seemed to her a single hour of woe in the midst of many hours of bliss. It

was one of the days when the moors are dappled with moving shadows of the clouds, when the sunshine is bright yellow, when the air races past one merrily. The two cousins laughed and chattered and sang, for even Mac cast aside his wonted quiet and became as hilarious as Betty herself. But when their faces at last were turned towards home, and they found themselves alone in the silence of the moonlit moors, a hush fell upon them. Directly before them, the round moon hung low in the dark blue eastern sky, so clear that the wind-blown locks of the maid in the moon were distinctly visible. In the clean, pale light, they could see for miles around them, see the low curves of David's Hills, see the distant knots of scrub oak where the mist lay white over the peat bogs, see even the gleam of a revolving windmill in Quiddum village, far to the left.

Like the broad blade of a silver knife, the straight white road cut the moors, rising and falling over the uneven ground. At the top of the last hill, Mac instinctively pulled in his horse. At their feet, the points of higher ground rose from the mist like tiny islands in a silver sea; beyond was the huddle of lights

which marked the village; beyond again, the ocean tossing restlessly in the dazzling whiteness of the moonlight. Only a tinkling cowbell and the boom of the surf broke the stillness. The moonlight and the silence magnified the distances until it was as if they looked down from a mountain top upon a world spread out at their feet.

As Mac took up the lines again, he spoke.

"I say, Betty," he remarked; "weren't you a little bit hard on Percival? I like the fellow, and I'm rather sorry for him. He's down on his luck just now."

Mac never nagged; all the more, his occasional words of rebuke carried weight with his tempestuous young cousin.

CHAPTER SEVEN

"BETTY?"

"Yes, in a minute." Betty's voice came from the veranda.

"What are you doing?"

"Emptying the sand out of my shoes, as usual."

"Come down and sit under the awning with me."

"So early? Why, mamma, there won't be a soul there."

"There will be two souls, when we get there. The surf is running high, this morning; besides, I want a talk with my girl. I haven't seen anything of her since the boys came."

"Not seen me, Mamma Farrington! I've not been away for a single day since we came to Quantuck. I haven't even been off for a meal, till last night. I should think you had seen as much of me as you ever do."

"That shows you aren't a mother," Theo-

dora said, laughing, as she tucked Betty's hand under her arm and started for the beach. "When you have a daughter of your own, Betty ——"

"I'm not going to have a daughter," she interrupted. "I am going to be an old maid, and have a marmoset, and edit a paper for a living."

"Perhaps. But if you should happen to have a daughter instead of a marmoset, you would find out that, once in a long while, you would want her for your very own self, without anybody else in the way."

"Of course, that is much the nicest thing for the daughter," Betty responded thoughtfully. "But don't you ever get sick of me?"

"Never." Theodora's tone left no doubt of her sincerity.

"I don't see why. You have papa, and I should think he would be all you'd need. I'm not jealous, mamma," Betty laughed frankly; "but I supposed you loved him better than all the rest of the world put together."

"I do, dear. I think it would kill me to lose him out of my life." Theodora shuddered a little, as she looked out over the gleaming, pounding waves, for, on just such a day, years

before, her husband had nearly lost his life in saving Mac from the fury of Quantuck surf.

Betty dropped down at her mother's side and fell to digging holes with the industry that possesses every one who sits on that soft sandy beach.

"Tell me again how you used to know him," she begged. "I love to hear about the way he came to live next door, and you and Uncle Hu used to be nice to him."

And Theodora told. Both she and her husband never tired of going over and over the old days when their friendship was simple and frank and uncrossed by any idea of love. They delighted in making merry over their youthful tiffs and escapades, and, at least three times a week, Mr. Farrington reminded his wife of the time she read to him her maiden effort in novel writing which bore the cheery title *In the Furnace of Affliction*, and came to its final chapter only with the death throes of its last character.

"You must have had fine times together," Betty sighed enviously. "I wish I had a neighbor."

Theodora silently congratulated herself upon the fortunate turn the conversation had taken,

for she had come down to the beach in order to say certain things to Betty, and she had scarcely known how to open the subject without antagonizing her young daughter.

"I thought you had," she answered quietly.

"Who?" Betty ceased digging and looked up at her mother with honest, questioning eyes.

"What about Percival Ainslee?"

"Oh, him!" Betty's falling inflection was eloquent.

"Well, why not?"

"Why, I just don't care anything about him, one way or the other," Betty replied flatly.

"He's a good fellow and a gentleman. Moreover, he isn't a dunce."

"But I like Mac better. I'm not responsible for Percival; I ought to see that our boys have a good time, and I can't do both."

This was not encouraging. Theodora was silent for a time, trying to decide how she could best appeal to Betty's sympathies. Twenty feet away from them, Phebe's sons were shrieking with rapture, while they buried a venerable white bulldog belonging to one of the fishermen. Just inside the line of surf, a

group of new arrivals were taking what was obviously their first sea bath. There were three of them, a lean, round-shouldered man and two women whose skirts sagged limply about their ankles. Theodora watched them thoughtfully, while they soused themselves up and down in the edge of the water, swaying to and fro like a trio of half-driven piles. Occasionally a wave knocked them over and boiled them; but they picked themselves up once more and clutched one another's elbows yet more firmly, while their faces grew blue and their lips distorted themselves into an agonized smile.

Suddenly Theodora bent forward and pulled Betty's head over into her lap.

"Betty," she said, looking straight down into the brown eyes that laughed up at her; "what would you think, if I called you a very selfish little girl?"

"Selfish? Me? What do you mean, mamma?" Betty struggled to sit up and face her mother.

"No, lie still, dear. We can talk better so, when I have you well in hand." Theodora spoke playfully. Then she grew grave. "I am going to give you a little lecture about

Percival," she said. "I was sorry you refused to let him go, yesterday. He heard it, and it hurt him."

"I'm sorry he heard; but I couldn't have him go."

"Why not?"

"Mamma! And spoil all my good time with Mac? Mac is my cousin; Percival isn't anything to me. Mrs. Van Hicks ought to entertain him."

"Betty, let's suppose a case. If you had been sent to spend the summer with—well, with rather an awful old aunt, if you didn't know many people and were a little homesick, and then if you sprained your wrist and had to be out of all the fun, wouldn't you want some of the young people to look out for you a little?"

"Yes, I suppose so," she admitted reluctantly. "But I'm not the only young person in Quantuck."

"No; but you are the nearest."

"You know you don't like Mrs. Van Hicks," Betty persisted.

"No," Theodora said frankly; "I don't like Mrs. Van Hicks at all, and I don't like to have you with her; but I do like Percival.

He is at the Lodge, every day, so you have plenty of chances to see him, when Mrs. Van Hicks isn't there."

Betty made a little grimace of disgust.

"He's everlastingly at the Lodge, seems to me! But why can't the boys look out for him? It's not my place."

"Mac does. But, Betty, it is the girls who can do this kind of thing best. I don't mean that you are to coddle Percival or be silly about him. But there's nobody in Quantuck who could give him a better time than you, if you chose, just because you are a girl. He is at the Lodge a great deal, for I have urged him to come over; but, unless Mac is there, he always goes away when you come in. He is half-ill and forlorn. Aunt Babe says he must have suffered a great deal from his wrist. Only yesterday, she said that she wondered at his courage, for it will be all summer before he can swim or play ball, and it aches now, nearly all the time."

"If he's so forlorn, why doesn't he tell his mother and go home?" Betty asked restively.

"Because his mother is in Europe. Betty," Theodora's voice took on a mischievous tone;

"I distinctly remember the way you prinked, three weeks ago, when Percival Ainslee was expected at Quantuck. I also remember missing my cold cream, one morning, and finding it in your room."

Betty blushed guiltily.

"Yes; but then I supposed he'd be different."

"How different?"

"Oh, I don't know. A young man with manners, not a puggy-nosed boy."

"I think he's much more agreeable as he is," Theodora responded decidedly. "Now, Betty, listen. I have been really and truly disappointed in this little daughter of mine. It isn't for Percival Ainslee alone; it is for your own self. I want you to be thoughtful and generous, willing to give up your own fun to help somebody else have a good time, quick to see who is left out in the cold and ready to bring him into the middle of things. That's what makes a girl a favorite, Betty. She can be as bright and pretty and dainty as she chooses; but it all won't help her a bit, so long as she goes her own way without trying to help on others. I want you to be a gracious, kindly woman, dearie, one whose best

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times of all come when she has helped somebody else along."

Betty's eyes had softened. No one but Theodora had the power to bring just that expression into the girlish face.

"But I don't see how I can do all that, mamma."

"You have more chances than any other girl in Quantuck, Betty. Because papa has more money than some of the others, because there are enough of our family so we can have our best times just by ourselves, we can do as we like here."

"Mamma, you sound very snobbish," Betty objected gravely.

Theodora shook her head.

"Betty, all the money in the world shouldn't make us snobbish; it ought to make us very meek. The more money we have, the more chance we have to use it well, and so few of us make the most of our chances. It is a great deal easier to be an unspoiled poor girl than an unspoiled rich one, and that is one reason I want my Betty, every single day, to try to grow kindly and generous and gentle in all her ways. Your father and I expect great things of you, for you are all we have."

Two heavy tears hung on Betty's lashes, and she was silent for a long time. When she spoke, however, it was with a trace of her old whimsical fun.

"Well, I suppose Percival is my next chance. I do wish he were just a little bit more toothsome to me; but I'll try to be ready to meet him, when he comes."

All the rest of that day, Betty was unusually thoughtful. Her conscience was not an especially lusty one; but Mac's words, the night before, had stirred it up a little, so that her mother's talk had fallen upon attentive ears. In so far as she thought anything at all about the matter, Betty meant to be a good girl, and she was somewhat disturbed to find that she had fallen short of her mother's expectations. It had been easy for her to ignore Percival Ainslee, because, since that first morning on the beach, he had never put himself in her way. But, if he were the cause of her mother's lecture, Betty resolved to ignore him no longer. Neither, if possible, would she show the antagonism he aroused in her. Instead, she would swallow him like a large and bitter pill, as a tonic for her moral digestion.

With her resolutions fresh in her mind,

Betty gave up her usual long swim, the next morning, and paddled aimlessly about in the edge of the water until she saw Percival, with Adonis waddling at his heels, come down the narrow board walk. A few experiments had convinced him that it was better to keep out of the surf until his wrist was stronger, so he settled himself in the row of onlookers along the beach. A moment later, Betty had assured herself that her mother was close at hand to support her through the ordeal, and she dropped down, dripping, just in front of the boy.

"Such a shame you are missing all the bathing!" she remarked, as she settled her scarlet collar and tightened the knot of her scarlet turban. "How soon do you think you'll go in again?"

"Mrs. Barrett says I can't swim any more, this summer."

Betty thoughtfully sprinkled a handful of sand over the wrinkled stomach of Adonis, and Adonis scratched the air with a languid hind foot, in token of appreciation.

"Too bad, when you were getting on so fast with your lessons! But I don't see why you don't go in, even if you can't swim."

He gave a little shrug of disgust.

"And frolic in the edge with the grand-dames? Thanks, no! The fellows would hoot at me."

"I'd let them hoot, then," Betty replied audaciously. "Go in, to-morrow, and I'll see that our boys stay with you. It will be a mercy to mamma to keep Harold from swimming out so far. She worries; but she hates to keep scolding him."

"But it will spoil your fun," he demurred.

She shook her head gayly. In her blue suit with its bright trimmings and her bright turban which completely hid her hair, she looked like a rosy child, and her face was animated, yet gentler than its wont. Percival was not dense. He detected a new ring to her voice, a friendly note which he had missed before, and it sounded very comforting to him. For one moment, it occurred to him that, under some circumstances, Quantuck might not be altogether intolerable.

"It won't spoil it a bit," Betty was saying. "We don't need to swim, all the time. But that wasn't what I started to say, when I came out. Don't you want to come over to the Lodge, to-night?"

"I want to; but I can't, worse luck! I've got to tow my aunt down to the beach. She is taken with a desire to see the surf in the full moon. Won't you come, too?"

He spoke rather doubtfully, so doubtfully that Betty hesitated and checked the curt refusal which was trembling on her lips. Behind his back, she glanced inquiringly at her mother, and her mother nodded.

"I believe I will," she said then. "I was going to make fudge; but that can wait till another night."

Both the man and the maid in the moon must have had their risibles sorely taxed, that evening, when they looked down upon Quantuck beach. The waves were breaking high, rushing up the slope and spreading far towards the outer line of awning posts. Near the top of the slope, Mrs. Van Hicks, wrapped in a white crape shawl, stood on an empty shoe box. The good lady lacked the agility to run before the waves; her long skirt and her French shoes were not adapted to a wetting. Accordingly, after two or three narrow escapes, Betty had remembered the box which did duty at the foot of the steps leading up to the village. Mounted on this insecure pedestal and with Adonis un-

der her arm, Mrs. Van Hicks might have passed for a modern reproduction of Jupiter and the infant Bacchus, only Jupiter never decked his ambrosial head with any such towering crest of aigrettes as Mrs. Van Hicks invariably donned at sunset, even in a community which dined at noon.

"How majestic it is! How wonderfully impressive!" she said, as she stretched one hand towards the moon and watched the light play across her diamonds. "I have seen the moon everywhere, at Chamouni, at Niagara Falls—we always paid five dollars a day at the hotels and had a suite of rooms opening off the parlors—and at Coney Island; but I never saw anything to compare with this. How scornfully the moon looks down upon us, mere insignificant dwarfs before the grand old ocean!

'Roll on, thou deep and dark blue——'

Oh, Percival! Betty! Stop! Wait for me!"

Her cry came too late. A sudden wave had swept around her shoe box, and the young people, knowing that she was above high-water mark, had scurried away to dry ground. Mrs. Van Hicks cast one look forward at the advancing flood, one look backward at her faith-

less escort. Then, mere insignificant dwarf that she was, she leaped down from her box and, with Adonis clasped in her hands, she started to scurry after them. It was at least twenty years since Mrs. Van Hicks had attempted to run. She was hampered both by lack of training and by superfluity of flesh, and Percival and Betty turned back just in time to see her stagger forward for a dozen steps and then fall, face downward, into the soft sand. Even then, her presence of mind did not forsake her. Pulling herself up on her hands and her toes, she wallowed forward like a portly alligator, while the half-flattened Adonis crawled out from under her, and the wave lost itself in the voluminous folds of her silken draperies.

As she halted, exhausted, a smothered laugh floated to her ears. She looked up hastily. Wrapped in her golf cape and arm in arm with her husband, Mrs. Gifford Barrett was just moving away up the board walk to the village.

It was a silent and sloppy Mrs. Van Hicks whom they escorted back to Traümerei. Only her dignity and her clothing were injured; but King Knut himself could not have resented the injury more. Adonis, refusing all overtures of peace, limped sullenly along in front of her,

now and then casting malign glances over his shoulder to remind his mistress that in future she must pay more careful heed to her footsteps.

As Betty paused on the veranda of the Lodge to wipe the tears of mirth from her eyes, Percival came rushing around the corner of the house.

"Oh, do let me get somewhere, where she can't hear me laugh!" he gasped. "I shall burst something inside of me, if I hold in any longer."

And in the prolonged merriment that followed, Betty and Percival took their first steps in a friendship which was bound to outlast many a Quantuck moon.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE next night, when Harold came to supper, he had tidings to impart.

"The moors are burning, Uncle Billy!" he exclaimed, as he tossed his cap towards the rack and drew his chair up to the table. "We have just come in from the lighthouse, Percival and I, and they are all on fire over by Quiddum Pond."

Mr. Farrington looked grave.

"Do you remember the time the island burned over, six years ago?" he asked.

"I should think I did," his wife answered. "All one night, I was sure that the village would go. They won't let this one get such a start, Billy."

"You can't tell. They are leisurely people, and they don't like to work on Sunday. Are they fighting it, Harold?"

"The keeper telephoned to Town for instructions, and the fire warden said he would drive over and look at it, in the morning," Harold replied, with a giggle.

"It hasn't rained a drop for three weeks, and the moors always burn like tinder. I'd like to kindle a fire under the fire warden."

"Keep calm, Billy, and have some more salad," Theodora advised him. "You can't reform Quantuck into any likeness of energy. You would spoil it, if you did. Mac, did you know I tried to buy some shoes in Town, at four o'clock, one afternoon, and I found the store locked, with a brown-paper notice on the door: 'Gone to Supper, Back Pretty Soon'?"

"I'll go you one better," Harold added. "I tried to get a new fishline at Smith's, yesterday. The man wouldn't let me have it, said it was the only one he had and, if he sold it, he would have to order some more from off island and it would take as much as a week to get them here."

"That was canny of him," Mr. Farrington observed. "Is the fire spreading, Harold?"

"Fast. It was working towards the links, when we came away. We watched it for a long time. Nobody seems at all disturbed about it, though."

By sunset, a thin banner of smoke was trailing low through the western sky; later, the

darkness was broken by a steady glow from the direction of Quiddum Pond. The beach and the little chapel both were deserted, for Quantuck had gathered itself at the top of the hill to watch the flickering blaze.

"I'm open to offers," Betty announced, from her seat on a fence post. "Who is going to walk out on the moors with me to see it, tomorrow?"

Three voices answered her, for Percival had joined their group.

"Percival spoke first," she declared serenely. "I'd rather have him, anyway, for he won't stop to botanize, every inch of the way, and I think he won't forget all about me and go skylarking off with the first boy he meets."

Both the cousins hung their heads at the rebuke, and Mac undertook to defend himself.

"But I thought you were interested in botany, Betty."

"So I am, sometimes; but I object to being landed ankle deep in a cranberry bog, and then left to flounder out by myself, while the escort of me goes rushing off after orchids." Betty's laugh took all the sting out of her words, for she rarely showed her thorns to Mac.

"I knew you really wouldn't care, you're

such a good old boy and you have me on your hands so much," she confessed to him, as they strolled homeward together. "I'd rather have you, of course; but there aren't many things that he can do, and—and——"

And Mac understood the little sacrifice.

However, by morning, Betty had changed her mind. The fire had burned fiercely, all night, sweeping towards the village until Theodora grew alarmed and spent half the night at her window, watching the angry glow in the west. But at daylight the wind dropped and the fire seemed to die away until only a light column of smoke rose here and there from the blackened moors.

"I'm so sorry to beg off," Betty said penitently; "but they are going to have the junior tournament, this morning, after all. Come out to the links and caddy for me, instead."

But Percival had always scorned golf as poky, and now he shook his head.

"Go on, of course. You mustn't miss the tournament. Besides, the fire has died out until there isn't anything to see."

He spoke with perfect good temper; nevertheless, as they went their different ways, both young faces were clouded a little and, for the

first time that season, Betty found that golf dragged. She lost her sureness of aim, then she lost her balls and finally she lost her temper, and she came home to dinner, tired, cross and ready to renounce the world and most things in it.

"Mamma, didn't you ever get sick of papa?" she asked unexpectedly, that night.

Theodora looked mystified.

"No; I can't remember that I did," she answered.

"Oh, well, perhaps not him; but I should think you would," Betty responded vaguely. "Of course, one gets sorry afterwards; but that never does any particular good."

But, the next morning, her opportunity for atonement came. She was sitting on the steps with Mac and Harold, when Percival appeared on the veranda of Traümerei.

"Good-morning!" she called gayly. "Do you keep engagements any better than I do? Harold has just come back from the moors, and he says the fire is spreading again. Can you take me out to see it, after breakfast; or am I too much in disgrace?"

"When will you be ready?"

"In an hour. We'll let the bathing go, this

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morning, and take all the time we want. There's the bell! I'll see you by and by."

Even muffins and bacon and the gay talk of the breakfast table are finite, and the hour was not quite over when Betty, in an immaculate pink waist and her rough grey skirt, went out to the steps. She found Percival waiting for her. He looked unusually bright and alert, and only the strip of linen about his wrist showed that he was in any sense a candidate for sympathy. Betty liked him better so. She had no especial taste for limpness in either her collars or her companions.

"What is the bag for?" he inquired rather disapprovingly. "We aren't going to South Africa."

Betty laughed.

"Wait till you get hungry," she answered. "I wouldn't throw it away till then."

For his only reply, he tucked it under his arm, and they tramped away together.

"I made such an exciting discovery, today," she announced, after a silence that lasted half-way to the golf links.

"What's that?"

"Oh, it won't excite you especially. It is only that we are going back with the boys."

"Back?"

"Yes, back to Montana. I have never been West, and I'm wild to go. If I were a man, I'd shoot buffaloes and Indians and things," she added bloodthirstily.

"How long are you going to stay?"

"Till we get tired of it. It is going to be such fun, only I shall have to do lessons with papa. That's better than school, though. I am nearly ready for college."

"Are you going to college?"

"Of course. Aren't you?"

"Yes; but I'm a boy."

"Well, I'm a girl. I'm going to Smith. Where are you going?"

"Yale."

"So is Mac. When do you go?"

"A year from now."

"What!" In the middle of the bicycle track, Betty stopped short to stare at him in astonishment. "I didn't suppose you were anywhere near ready. I am only a year younger than you, and I sha'n't be ready for three years." Her tone showed that she was slightly piqued. "You and Mac will be classmates, then," she added.

"Does he go in then?"

"Didn't you know it?"

"No; boys don't tell things. I didn't even know he was going at all."

"Yes, he is all ready; but grandpa wanted him to wait a little. Mac isn't so very strong, for all he is such a great, tall fellow, and grandpa thought it wouldn't hurt him to have a vacation. We shall have great times together, this fall."

"When do you go away?"

"Not for nearly a month. The rest of the clan will be here first."

"Who is coming?"

"Cousin Cis, first of all."

"Who is she?"

Betty laughed.

"Do you always ask questions at this rate? Sit down here and I'll tell you. You have walked me all out of breath; and, besides, my shoe is untied, and I am hungry."

"Allow me!" With a bow of mock ceremony, Percival tossed the bag into her lap, and then dropped down before her to tie her shoe.

"Tight, please; very tight. Oh, that will do! Cousin Cis is the most remarkable woman in the world, except mamma and Aunt Babe. She is papa's cousin, and she

used to have lots and lots of money; but she lost it all, and now she lives in a little scrimpy apartment in the edge of Harlem and gives music lessons to the children of her old friends. She and Uncle Allyn used to be great chums; they are engaged now, for that matter, and he is coming, next week, with Uncle Hubert."

"When does she come?"

"To-morrow night. Mac and I are going to ride over to meet her and come home by moonlight."

"Not much moonlight by that time."

"Sh-h!" she ordered him. "Don't say it. There will be some, and we are used to riding in the dark. I know every inch of the road, too."

"You'll break your necks," he predicted cheerfully; "and I'll have to go out with a box-cart and bring in the fragments. Were you going to open that bag?"

"Oh, I forgot. Help yourself." And Betty looked up with a smile into the grey eyes above her. Then, as she met their friendly gaze, she said impetuously, "Percival, I was just horrid, the day I wouldn't let you go to Town with us."

"Never mind; it's past praying for now," he returned philosophically. "Isn't it time we were moving? The fire is at least two miles off, and it won't come to us."

"Don't be too sure of that," she answered saucily, as she rose. "It may serve you as the wave did. Quantuck things appear to like you."

"Better than Quantuck people do," he retorted half bitterly.

"I'm not so sure. Anyway, we are getting up all sorts of sensations for your benefit. It is years since we have had such a fire as this."

"Was the other one as bad?" he asked, stooping to snatch a handful of berries.

"I can't remember much about it, except that we were cut off from town for a day or two." Then, as she reached the crest of a hill, she gave a little cry of horror. "Oh, Percival! Our lovely moors!"

At the south, the moors were still untouched by the fire. They stretched away towards Kidd's Treasure, mottled with every conceivable shade of green, greyish and emerald and vivid bronze. On the other side, the fire had done its work, and the beautiful

rolling outlines of David's Hills rose up, black and scarred, against the sky. Eastward nearly to the lighthouse, westward as far as they could see, from the charred ground scattered columns of sulphur-colored smoke rolled up, thick and heavy and broken at the base by licking tongues of orange flame. There was neither sky nor sun above them, nothing but the wide pall of smoke which rose sluggishly, hung poised in the air and then in long, lean brown banners floated off to sea.

"How do you like the prospect?" Percival inquired, after a pause.

Betty shuddered.

"Horrible! All the beautiful moors! Poor Cousin Cis, how disappointed she will be! But let's go nearer; let's go over to where they are fighting it."

Percival looked dubiously at the tangle of scrub oak and brambles between them and the fire.

"Can you get through this stuff?"

"Of course. It's nothing to what Mac and I have done. You go ahead, and I'll follow anywhere."

Obediently he took the lead. Betty liked it that he wasted no words in futile remon-

strances. She also liked the unerring instinct which showed him the shortest cuts, the most open paths. Even Mac had a tendency to lead her into blind alleys of bog and briar, whence he retraced his steps apologetically. Percival apparently paid no heed to the fact that she was a girl, yet he made her path easier at every step by little careful attentions too slight for acknowledgment.

"It's a good thing that your aunt and Adonis aren't here," Betty panted, as she paused to survey a three-corned tear in her skirt.

"Mr. Venus would be in a bad way here," Percival answered, with a giggle. "We are nearly through now, so keep up your courage."

"My courage is all right. Look! They are building back-fires and ploughing. This is the fire warden's collie."

They were close to the blaze now, and the fire, which had come to a tangle of scrub oaks, was crackling fiercely. Above it, the air was full of birds, whirling dizzily to and fro in the thick smoke and crying piteously to their babies in the blazing nests beneath. His nose to the ground, the collie wandered over the charred turf, pausing now and then to bolt an

easy prey. It was not a common experience for him to find his game ready cooked, and he gobbled the roasted field mice greedily. Beyond the circle of flame, a herd of cows grazed peacefully. Then a cottontail rabbit shot past them, and a little brown quail led her brood from their smoking covert.

Betty's eyes were glowing with excitement, and her breath came faster even than when she had been struggling through the thickets.

"It is terrible; but there is a certain fascination about it," she said. "Can't we walk out on the burned part a little? It feels cool enough here, and I want to go over to where the smoke is so thick."

"Look out that you don't get too far into it," Percival cautioned her.

"There's not a bit of danger. It is burning quite steadily, and the smoke shows that it is running the other way. Come!"

She started off across the charred stubble, and Percival followed willingly enough. Boy-like, he was not over-cautious, and his misgivings, if he had any, were slight ones. For a long distance, they could walk straight onward; then they were forced to make a detour around a hill up whose side the flames were

licking fast, then another detour around a blazing peat bog and over the sandy hummocks of a deserted prairie dog village, and still the fire seemed as far away as ever.

Suddenly Betty halted.

"Percival, the wind has changed, and the smoke is all coming this way."

The boy stopped as if he had been shot. He had spent one spring in Nebraska, and he had learned something of the ways of prairie fires, learned that it was not well to be on an unburned acre of grass in the midst of a horseshoe of flame.

"Come back!" he ordered briefly; and Betty, as she looked up in surprise, saw his face and offered no opposition.

Turning, they retraced their steps hurriedly, for the fire was fast coming towards them. The ground about them rose and fell in a succession of little hills and hollows, and they could see only for a short distance ahead. As they came up to the top of the first hill, they stopped, terrified.

The wind shifts suddenly at Quantuck. Now it had veered to the south and was blowing sharply back upon them, fanning all the dying embers to a blaze. As far as they

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could see, Betty and Percival were shut in by a ring of fire. Betty looked about her, saw their peril and recognized all its meaning. She grew white to the roots of her ruddy hair; but the McAlisters were not given to complaints, nor yet the Farringtons, and Betty showed the stock from which she came.

"What can we do?" she asked quietly.

There was no time for comment; but Percival felt a weight suddenly roll off him. He had expected tears and protestations.

"Stay here," he said. "I am going to see if there's any opening. I'll come back."

He rushed away. Betty could see him skirting the ring of flame, looking here and there, yet never slackening his pace. The circle was a wide one; but he was back before she had thought of expecting him.

"There is one chance, if we're quick," he said breathlessly. "The fire has caught us, and it won't be long before it takes this hill. Over there by the swamp, there is a spot where it is only in the low grass. We must break through that; it is only about thirty feet wide."

"Can we?"

"We must, or else be burned to death," he

said grimly. "It is the only way. What are your stockings made of?"

"My—stockings?"

"Yes, are they cotton?"

"You don't suppose I wear silk ones, on a tramp like this?" she returned, laughing, for she failed to catch his meaning.

In a second, he was on the ground, tearing off the heavy woolen ones he wore.

"Put these on over them, over your shoes and all."

"I won't," Betty answered rebelliously.

"I'll hold you, and do it myself, then," he threatened. "Quick!"

She recognized the fact that she had met a will stronger than her own, and she obeyed, while he put his shoes over his bare feet.

"What will you do?" she protested.

"I'm all right. Now, can you run fast? Give me your hand."

The next moment, she found herself being dragged across the moorland, panting, stumbling, almost falling, straight towards the spot where the ring of fire lay closest to the earth. Just once he paused at the very edge of the flame to snatch away her straw hat and pull his own soft felt one down over her face.

"Now!" he said encouragingly, and she felt herself pulled forward again.

There were a few endless moments, while she rushed on blindly, yielding to his guiding hand, while her feet smarted and her breath seemed almost stopped by the heavy smoke. Then she found herself in free air again, and she dropped down, exhausted, twenty feet from the blaze, and looked up at Percival who stood panting at her side.

"It's no use to try to thank you," she said, smiling rather wanly; "but I think you have saved my life, and I was the one to blame."

CHAPTER NINE

"WILLIAM, my own faithful husband!" The door of the writing-room opened a crack, and Theodora's voice came forth, as hollow as if it proceeded from the empty rain-water barrel.

"Yes, ma'am." Mr. Farrington looked up from his letters.

"Come hither and condole with me."

"I thought you didn't allow stragglers within the sacred precincts, while you were writing," he answered, as he rose and sauntered towards the door.

"Don't put on airs, Billy, when there's nobody around to be impressed with it," she admonished him. "As if you didn't spend half your time, listening to the music of my pen!"

"It does scratch horribly," he observed. "Why will you use those German things?"

"You would have me take to a fountain pen and squeaky glazed paper! But come inside."

"What for?"

"To condole with me. I need it."

He followed her into the little room on the south side of the house. A large desk was there, surmounted by an old photograph of himself at fifteen; but, across the room, a dozen scattered pages of manuscript and two or three flattened cushions littered the broad divan between the windows and betrayed the secret that Theodora's use for the desk was a matter of theory, not fact.

"Billy," his wife demanded solemnly, when they were alone; "what is fame?"

"How should I know? I'm not a novelist."

"Apparently that doesn't have any connection with the matter. You know *Baby Girda*, that child story I wrote in the spring? It wasn't in line for my people, so I sent it to Goodell and Shepard. They have had it for three months; my books usually meet their fate in two weeks. And now the answer is here."

"Rejected?" Mr. Farrington asked sympathetically.

"Worse. I could have forgiven a rejection; but this—this Object accepts it, says that it is a promising work for a new writer and expresses a cheery belief that, if I keep on as I

have begun, I may make a name for myself in time."

"How kind of him! He must be an ingenuous youth, Ted. What is more, he evidently thinks that you also are an ingenuous youth."

"One of my first reviews stated that I was evidently no longer young," she returned pensively. "I was twenty-three, then. It has been reserved for my old age to be hailed as a novice. Read it, Billy."

"Hm-m!" He frowned over the sheet in his hand. "Shall I write and suppress him?"

"What is the use? It is a good lesson for my vanity. Now have you time to hear my latest tale?"

"So the plum is to come last, Ted. I didn't suppose I was to be treated, when you asked me in here."

Theodora had dropped down upon the divan. She looked up at her husband with a deep, thoughtful light in her eyes, a gentleness which beautified her handsome face.

"Billy, my dear old man," she burst out; "how could I ever write, or think, or live, even, without you?"

He crossed the room and sat down beside her, laying one hand on her shoulder.

"Ted," he said gravely; "it has been a success; hasn't it, this marriage of ours? Not a day goes by that I don't pity other men because their wives aren't just like mine. The best hour of my life was the hour you knocked the apple down on my head."

There was a short silence. Then Theodora said slowly,—

"Billy, I suppose I have been fairly successful. My books get praised; moreover, they sell, and people are nice to me about them. And yet, even if it is good to be Theodora Farrington, the novelist, it is a great deal better to be Billy Farrington's wife and sure of his sympathy in everything I do." She laid her head against his shoulder in one of her rare caresses; then she brushed her hand across her eyes. "Come, William," she said briskly; "you must listen to this tale now, for I have ever so much to do, to get ready for Cicely. Have Betty and Mac started?"

"Yes, an hour ago. They are going out to the Town links for an hour. They tried to make Harold go; but he refused."

"Betty looks pale, to-day," Theodora said, with a thoughtful frown. "I am afraid Percival made her walk too far, yesterday morning."

"It is much more likely to have been the other way about," Mr. Farrington said, laughing. "Betty is a match for any boy. Do you know, Ted, I rather like that Percival of yours. In spite of his being related to the Van Hicks, he is well-bred; and there is a good deal of the man about him. He's an honest, straightforward sort of fellow, and I think he would keep his head in an emergency."

Mr. Farrington had no idea how truly he had judged the boy. On their way home, the day before, Betty and Percival had agreed that it would be better, for the present, at least, to say nothing about the danger through which they had passed. The fire was under control; the conditions were not likely to be repeated, and nothing would be gained by harrowing the nerves of their elders by the story of past events. Betty mourned a little that she would be unable to lionize Percival as her rescuer; but even she had no idea how great the peril had been, nor how promptly and bravely it had been faced by the freckled, pug-nosed boy. Accordingly, then, they had kept their secret. Betty was so accustomed to going bareheaded that no

one noticed the loss of her hat; and Percival had contrived to tuck the ankles of his charred stockings inside the tops of his shoes. They both had been rather silent at dinner time; but Mrs. Van Hicks was never very observant, and Betty pleaded the fatigue of her walk.

Afterwards, she had been glad to escape to her room, to think over the events of the morning. She sat almost motionless by the window until, late in the afternoon, she saw Percival come out of Traümerei and start for the beach. Then she ran down-stairs and followed him; but her footsteps were noiseless in the soft sand, and he started abruptly, as she overtook him near the row of awnings.

"Percival!" she called. "Percival!"

He turned to look at her, as she came towards him, with the late sunshine beating on her red-gold hair and on her pale summer gown. She held out both hands to him.

"It's rather late to begin, when you have been here so long," she said shyly; "but, now we've been through the fire together, don't you think we ought to be real, true friends?"

He started to make some off-hand reply; then, as he met her eyes, half merry, half

afraid and altogether winning, he silently took her hands in his.

And now he was writing a mock-heroic account of their escapade to his mother, while Betty and Mac, their caddy bags slung on their backs, were coasting along the road to Town before a strong breeze.

"If it keeps on blowing like this, the fire will start up again," Mac predicted. "It is still burning, over behind that hill."

Betty shuddered a little, as she glanced across the blackened moors at the thin column of smoke. She changed the subject hastily.

"If it keeps on blowing like this, we shall have a good time, riding home."

"The wind may go down. I hope so, for we want to race the train over, you know. Betty, we sha'n't find many more flowers on these moors."

"Isn't it fearful!" she responded so feelingly that Mac turned to look at her in astonishment.

"It doesn't make things look especially pretty," he remarked; "but, as long as it was going to happen and nobody was in the least danger, I'm glad I saw it. I confess that I rather enjoyed it."

"But somebody—" Betty began hastily. Then she checked herself, and asked a question about the golf links instead.

Delayed by the strong headwind, the little steamer was not sighted until long past her usual hour, and darkness had quite fallen by the time she had crawled across the bar and up the narrow channel to the wharf. Half the summer colony of Town were watching her; but Betty was in the forefront of the crowd, capering excitedly, as the people filed past her.

"Oh, Cousin Cis!"

There was a rush, a little nervous laugh, an exclamation or two; and then Betty came out from the embrace and introduced Mac. Cicely took his hand and looked him over in mock astonishment.

"This great thing Mac Holden! And you used to be such a cunning youngster, trudging around at my heels. No; don't take everything, my dear boy. I am faint and weary; but I can still totter under the weight of an umbrella."

There was a hearty ring to the words, and, in the dim light, Mac could see a pair of merry grey eyes, two deep dimples and a plain grey cloth suit with a scarlet tie showing above the

close-fitting coat. All in all, he decided that he approved of Cousin Cicely.

"Oh, the dear old train!" she exclaimed, as she took her seat. "It hasn't changed a bit, unless it is a shade more ricketty. You are on your bicycles? I wish I were going to ride back with you; but I'll see you at the Lodge."

"We'll be there before you. Come, Mac, let's be starting."

"Betty," Mac said suddenly, as they left the last Town light behind them; "Betty, whatever possessed us to forget our lanterns?"

"I didn't forget mine," Betty returned airily. "I hate to ride with a lantern, when it is moonlight."

"Moonlight!"

"Yes, the moon will be up soon."

"It is past time for it. Look at those clouds."

"Never mind," Betty said sturdily. "The road is so white that we can see it perfectly well."

"But people can't see us, and I don't know as I care to be run into."

"You needn't worry. Nobody else is stirring, at this time of night."

"Nobody else is so foolish," Mac responded, half under his breath.

Under ordinary conditions, Betty would not have minded the ride. Trained to a bicycle in her childhood, she rode as carelessly as she walked, by night or by day, on good roads or on bad. This evening, however, it all seemed different. Tired by the long walk of the day before, she had little strength to face the strong wind; her nerves unsteadied by her rush through the burning moors, she found herself terrified by the black loneliness of the night. Once out on the open moor where no sound broke the stillness around them, where no hospitable light shone from any farmhouse window, it suddenly occurred to her to question what would happen, if any accident came to either of them. If she fell from her bicycle and broke her legs, Mac could never carry her to a house; neither would she be left alone while he went for help. The very thought of it caused her wheel to wobble unsteadily.

"Tired, Betty?"

She realized that Mac had been talking to her for some time, and that the abrupt change in his accent had roused her. She wondered if he were as nervous as she, and she forced

herself to speak in her usual tone to reassure him.

"Oh, no; only a little out of breath."

"Shall we ride slower?"

"No; let's hurry on. I can keep up. Have you seen the train?"

"We are ahead of it yet."

"It is so dark I can't tell where we are. Can you see, Mac?"

"Almost to the little white bridge. We're all right, dear. Would you rather stop for a minute?"

"I am getting on well enough. Listen, Mac! Is that a horse?"

"I don't hear anything."

She laughed suddenly.

"Mac, I'm like a baby, afraid of the big dark. It's disgraceful; but I imagine all sorts of things coming towards me. If I met a mouse, I should take it for an elephant in my present frame of mind."

Mac laughed as gayly as if he had not detected the nervousness in her voice.

"Betty, what was that absurd elephant song that Harold was trying to teach us? It has been running in my head, all day, and I just can't get it."

"This?" She hummed a few bars of the song, and Mac joined her, for he had recently come into possession of a good tenor voice. Later, he started another song and yet another. She knew then that he was doing it to keep up her courage; the next day, it occurred to her that he sang in order to announce their coming to any one they might meet. Before them, the road showed but faintly under the low-hanging clouds; in the east was the distant glow of the dying fires, but it was too slight to light their way. Twice they heard a bicycle whiz past them on the other side of the road; but it only served to emphasize the great empty silence about them. At length, they caught the first welcoming gleam from the lighthouse on the cliff and, the next minute, a few dots of light moved slowly across the darkness at their right hand.

"The train!" Betty exclaimed, for it was a relief to know that some one other than themselves was alive and stirring.

"Yes, and here is the path," Mac responded. "Can you see to follow me?"

If it had been dark on the open road, it was darker still in the narrow path. The

branches of scrub oak, bowed with the heavy dew, whipped at their ankles and lashed at their breasts; and once Mac mistook the way and rode straight into the thicket. Then, as they came over a hillock, far across the moors and directly in their path, they saw a point of brilliant light. It came near and nearer. They rang their bells in warning, and there was an answering hail,—

"Ahoy there, Mac! Is it dark where you came from?"

"Percival Ainslee!" Betty exclaimed, as she tumbled off from her bicycle, as stiff in body as she was limp in mind.

"That's my name," he replied composedly. "I'm sorry it has so many frills to it."

"What are you doing here?"

"Looking for an honest man, like old What's-His-Name in the tub."

"For us? Who sent you?"

"Mineself, as Paul Barrett says. I thought you would have your match, following this path. Harold said you didn't take any lanterns. I helped myself to Mac's, for it is better than mine, and started off to meet you. It's rather good fun, this prowling over the moors at night."

Betty shook her head.

"It's a kind of fun I don't care for. But do you mean that you have walked clear out here, two miles from Quantuck, just because you worried about us?"

Percival turned the flaring gas lantern full in her face and surveyed her quizzically.

"No; I wasn't worried," he drawled. "I couldn't remember whether you had on a turn-down collar or not, and I came out to see."

Betty took the heavy lantern from his hand and fastened it to her wheel.

"This makes another reason," she said softly, as Percival bent down to help her.

CHAPTER TEN

"GIFF, I wish you weren't going away, just as I have come," Cicely observed, with her eyes fixed on the tumbling sea.

"I'm sorry, myself, Cis; but the fates will have it so."

"I suppose it will be rather good fun to polish an English chorus and bring away a few sprigs of English laurel; but I know you'll be thinking of Quantuck in the midst of it. Wasn't it here that you gained your idea for *The Merman?*"

"'We went up the beach by the sandy down,
Where the sea-stocks bloom in the white-walled town,'"

Phebe warbled raptly, but discordantly.

"I'm not a musician, myself, Babe," Allyn reminded her; "but it distresses even me to hear you flat. What must Giff's sensations be?"

"Oh, I'm used to it. Phebe always insists upon singing my music over to me," her hus-

band responded jovially. "That isn't so bad; but she took it into her head to study harmony, last winter, and she framed everything she composed on the model of Yankee Doodle."

Phebe put her elbows on her knees and her chin in her hands, while she surveyed him adoringly. She was convinced that, in Gifford Barrett, the world possessed the greatest composer it had ever known, and she had never ceased to wonder why he had married her unmusical self. But neither fame nor wifely adoration had sufficed to spoil Mr. Barrett. He worked hard and earnestly at his profession, and his sense of humor supplied the necessary balance.

"I want you to go, Giff," she said pensively; "but I shall be wretched every single minute you are away. Don't get any more famous, for fear you'll be summoned to Zululand next, to conduct a tom-tom orchestra, and be devoured by a music-loving public."

"Speaking of fame," Hubert McAlister said; "Allyn is still to be heard from."

The two McAlisters had reached the Lodge, only the night before and but just in time to say good-bye to their brother-in-law before he

sailed for England. In spite of the more than ten years' difference in their ages, there was a great resemblance between the brothers, both of them dark, slight, clean-cut men who filled Theodora's heart with pride, whenever she looked at them.

"What is it, Allyn?" she asked quickly.

"Nothing very remarkable. I can't do novels and Mermen, so I have accomplished the engine and named it *The Cicely*."

Cicely sat up, turning her back upon Mr. Barrett and the tunnel on which they were collaborating.

"Allyn! Named for me? You dear old fellow!"

"You like it, then? I didn't know how the idea would strike you, but —— Here it is." He tossed a pamphlet into her lap.

"Like it! Of course I like it. I have been hoping for years that Cousin Ted would dedicate a book to me, or else that Giff would create a song in my honor; but this is so much more—more concrete."

"Well, yes. I should say it was," Hubert commented irreverently, and the laugh that followed, gave place to a buzz of congratulation and question in regard to the new pump-

ing engine which had so long occupied the attention of its inventor.

"Hubert!" Theodora said suddenly, after the talk had wandered in other directions.

"Ted!"

"Please put your head in my lap. I think you are getting a bald spot, and I want to inspect it."

Obediently he rolled over in the sand and put his brown head into the lap of his twin sister.

"Yes, quite bald, and I see seven grey hairs and two—no, three wrinkles," she enumerated pitilessly. "Do you know that it is high time you thought of getting married?"

"What's the good? I did think of it; but she preferred to get herself engaged to that young brother of mine. Cis, that fellow never will be able to support you; you'd better take me, after all," he advised her gravely.

"Oh, we are going to live in luxury on the profits from my namesake. Truly, Allyn, it is a great thing for you to have done."

"Somebody please admire me," Mrs. Farrington requested. "I haven't been asked to beat time for a British band, nor yet have I created an engine. I want some appreciation though, my own self."

"My wife, I appreciate you," Mr. Farrington responded. "I'd rather have one of your salads than all the pumpers and beaters in creation."

"Sorry for that!" Allyn observed, as he rose. "I ordered one for The Savins and one for your house, just as I came away. Come on, Cis; it is time that this mutual admiration party broke up and prepared itself for a swim. Are any of the rest of you coming?"

The unwritten law of Quantuck life has ordained that the world shall bathe between the hours of eleven and one. Daily at that time, half the population disports itself in the surf, the other half sits in serried ranks upon the beach and passes invidious comments upon the bathers. At such periods, woe betide the awkward man, or the woman whose skirt sags beyond the proper length! No one pays any heed to the ocean, even. That is reserved for the afternoon or for the early morning. At noontime, the row of watchers along shore gives its whole attention to the groups in the water.

All types are represented there, and they range themselves in a certain order: the expert swimmers outside, then the beginners, then, just at the breaking of the waves, the

novices and the cowards. The elderly matrons recline in the edge, smiling blandly as the waves ebb and flow about them; and, in the spot where sand and water meet, the little children caper about, pail in hand, gathering material for the perennial cakes which the childish imagination has substituted for the old-time, traditional pie. Beyond and about them all the surf rolls in, now crashing, now plashing; but always alight with marvellous tints of green and blue and tawny red, always pausing, wave after wave, for that marvellous instant when it holds itself in perfect curve, before dashing down upon the sand below. On this particular morning, it was heavier than is usual in August, and the shattered waves came racing far up the beach in countless swirling eddies.

Directly after breakfast, Hubert had demanded an adjournment to the beach. All the long morning, they had sat under the awning, tasting to the full the delight of being together once more, for, during the winter months, the Barretts and Cicely lived in New York, Allyn was in Pittsburg and Hubert in the old home, with the Farringtons next door. However, no mere question of miles could

separate the McAlister clan which had broadened to include Billy Farrington and Gifford Barrett, and even Cicely Everard who was a cousin only of Billy Farrington.

Allyn and Cicely had strolled back to the Lodge, and Phebe and Hubert were preparing to follow, when Betty came running down the beach and plumped herself into her aunt's lap. Brown as a berry, flushed with laughter and exercise, in her scarlet-trimmed suit and her scarlet turban, she was a picture of merry, healthy girlhood. Her father's eyes glowed with pride, as he rescued Phebe by pulling his daughter down upon his own knee.

"Don't kill your Aunt Babe," he advised her; "for then Uncle Giff might have to postpone his trip to England."

"Something else may kill her," Betty responded, with a backward glance at Harold who followed in her train. "Mrs. Van Hicks is on her way down here. I heard her telling Percival that she was coming down early, for she wanted to meet dear Mrs. Farrington's brothers. Harold and I raced down to warn you."

Phebe glanced apprehensively over her shoulder.

"There's no time to flee, for the old cormorant is upon us," she lamented. "I do wish somebody would be benevolent enough to bury that bath robe of hers. Those purple dragons always remind me of a collection of family portraits."

Hubert followed the direction of her eyes.

"Suffering Moses!" he observed tersely.

For the past few weeks, the two most prominent figures on Quantuck beach had been Harold Holden and Mrs. Van Hicks. When, worn out by anxiety, the watchers on shore had turned their eyes away from the smooth brown head bobbing up and down on the waves far out towards the rips, they had sought the impressive figure of Mrs. Van Hicks. Comedy is always a welcome relief from possible tragedy. If Harold's recklessness supplied the one element, the picturesqueness of Mrs. Van Hicks just as surely supplied the other. However, there are variations of type, even in picturesqueness, and Mrs. Van Hicks belonged, not to the school of Raphael, but rather to that of Mr. Phil May. Her figure was neither plump nor of graceful outline; her suit was of the ready-made variety, and she surmounted it with a

voluminous bath robe whereon purple dragons pranced about on a background of yellow Turkish towelling. With her craggy Roman nose, the dragons below and a huge yellow turban above, Mrs. Van Hicks was an appalling vision, as she came down the beach. Without swerving to the right or the left, she advanced directly upon the Farrington awning.

"It is such a pleasure to meet a brother of Mrs. Farrington," she said affably, as Hubert smothered his emotions and rose to greet her with the best grace at his command. "I assure you, she is quite the pet of Quantuck, this summer."

"I am pleased to hear it," Hubert murmured gratefully.

"Yes, we all enjoy her; she is so vivacious, so —so *chic*," Mrs. Van Hicks replied, seating herself as majestically as if the sand had been a monarch's throne. Then she thrust a pudgy forefinger into the rounder portion of Phebe's cheek.

Phebe haughtily removed her cheek from reach of the forefinger.

"I beg your pardon," she said frostily. "Did you wish to attract my attention?"

"Oh, no; I—only —— Don't you love Quantuck, Mr. McAlister?"

"I am fond of the place," Hubert replied guardedly.

"I adore it. Of course, it is simple, and the eggs are not always as fresh as they might be; but the air and the swimming atone for so much."

Hubert glanced more respectfully at her elderly frame.

"Do you swim, Mrs. Van Hicks?" he inquired.

"Oh, I plash about a little," she responded, with a coy modesty which caused Betty to draw a fold of Phebe's skirt across her face, while Harold, safe in his position in the lee of the purple dragons, kicked in token of his glee. "I used to find it quiet here, when I first came down," she went on, after a pause which no one else seemed inclined to break. "I have always been used to entertaining so much. Why, when I was younger and poor Mr. Van Hicks was alive, people actually used to go in one door and out the other, all day long."

"Mighty inhospitable to send 'em out by the kitchen door!" Mac commented *sotto voce*, for by this time he had joined the group.

But Betty laid a firm hand on his lips.

"Hush!" she commanded in a whisper. "Don't spoil it all."

There was another silence.

"You have another brother; haven't you, Mrs. Farrington?" Mrs. Van Hicks inquired. "Didn't you tell me you had a twin brother?"

"I am Mrs. Farrington's twin," Hubert explained.

"You? Why, I didn't suppose you were nearly so old as she is. Do excuse me, dear Mrs. Farrington; but a man always holds his own so much longer than we poor women can do." She paused for a murmur of dissent. None came, however, so she pursued the conversation. "And you are the one left at home? You keep up your father's farm, I presume, Mr. McAlister. It is always so refining to till the face of nature, and reap where one has not sown, and watch the succession of seedtime and harvest."

Involuntarily, Mr. Barrett searched his mind for a suitable *motif* for the anthem-like form of her words. Then he held his breath, for Phebe had risen with an abruptness which boded no friendly demonstration towards Mrs. Van Hicks.

"My brother is a lawyer," she snapped. "Hubert, do come up to Valhalla and put on your bathing clothes."

Mrs. Van Hicks looked up at her. The orange turban was much askew; but the smile beneath it was alluring.

"Cruel girl!" she said merrily. "How can you take your brother away, just as we are getting on so nicely?"

But Phebe was already far up the beach; and Hubert, with a deprecating glance at Mrs. Van Hicks, sidled away after his sister.

"There is Percival," Betty whispered to Mac, a minute later. "Do go and head him off. He mustn't come. He would die of mortification, if he heard his dear auntie's conversational efforts."

And Mac nodded understandingly, as he departed.

But Mrs. Van Hicks was beginning to weary of the one-sided conversation. Rising, she cast aside her bath robe and descended the beach. She had confessed to plashing about a little; but even that was rather an exaggerated statement. Her evolutions in the surf were not convolutions; they were wholly angular. They consisted of exactly three positions, and she

always took them in exactly the same order. In the first place, she seated herself in the extreme edge of the water, with her knees drawn up into ungraceful proximity to her Roman nose. Just as the watchers on shore were deciding that she had petrified in that position and would never move again, suddenly and as if some unseen hand had pulled an invisible trigger, she snapped herself out at full length, with her stockinged soles pointed seaward and her orange turban rested on the sand far up the slope. A dozen times, she executed this manœuvre to her own perfect satisfaction and to the vast merriment of the beach. Then the supreme moment came. Turning her back to the deep, she knelt with every appearance of reverence, and waited with bowed head for what might overtake her. As a rule, the wave merely lapped against her feet; but on a few occasions she had mistaken her distance, and the onlookers were all eager for a repetition of the event.

On this particular morning, Mrs. Van Hicks was uncommonly rash. Just as she had turned herself about to kneel, she had spied Hubert and Phebe coming down the beach; and, instead of giving proper heed to the choice of

site for her *finale*, she sank down just where she stood, and waved her hand gracefully in the direction of the board walk. The next instant there was the boom of a heavy wave and the splash of white foam. A minute later, from the very heart of the foam there appeared an orange turban, two generous feet and a Roman nose, all mingled in an inextricable tangle.

At the same instant, Hubert and the bathing-master rushed to the rescue. Between them, they seized Mrs. Van Hicks, untangled the knots in her person and set her on her feet once more. Then they gasped with horror, while, on the beach above, the onlookers pointed their umbrellas towards the sea and became hysterical in their shadow. On the crest of the incoming wave floated an orange turban; but the crest of Mrs. Van Hicks was missing. In its place was a bare and shining scalp.

There was an awful moment of uncertainty. Then Hubert showed the stuff of which he was made. Plunging into the surf, he rescued the turban, stood close at the side of Mrs. Van Hicks while she knotted it into its accustomed place and then, offering her his hand, led her up through the edge of the waves, through

the giggling, tittering crowd, straight to the Farrington awning where she had left her bath robe.

But even the purple dragons appeared to have joined the general mutiny against Mrs. Van Hicks. Harold was now swimming far out at sea, and no one had noticed the busy hands pawing the sand, ten minutes before. Search was vain; Hubert caught up a rug, threw it across the shoulders of his companion and walked away up the beach at her side.

Theodora was waiting for him, when he came back.

"Hu, I'm proud of you!" was all she said.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

TO Cicely Everard, there was something peculiarly charming in the quiet life of Quantuck. She had long been used to looking back upon her first visit there as upon the last care-free summer she had ever spent. Less than six months later, the collapse of the old banking firm of Everard and Clark had swallowed up her father's fortune and changed the sixteen-year-old Cicely from a drone to a worker in the human hive. She had borne the test well. She had shut her teeth, taken up her burden and started out into her new life with a merry courage which few could or would have shown. That was fifteen years ago. Now, at thirty-one, Cicely was bravely supporting her invalid father and making a cozy home for him, while, just as bravely, Allyn McAlister was waiting for the day when she would be free to come to him. However, Allyn's business kept him in Pittsburg, and Cicely realized that the broken-down elderly

man to whose life she was giving her own would be wretched, away from the city where all his years had been spent. It was something that Allyn and she loved each other and were willing to wait.

Her anticipated vacation was passing only too quickly. She even grudged the time for sleep. Late at night, there were murmuring voices on the veranda of the Lodge; in the early morning, she and Allyn were on the beach together.

> " 'The sun was shining on the sea,
> Shining with all his might,' "

Cicely was quoting, one morning, as they turned their steps towards home and breakfast. "I'm the Walrus and you are the Carpenter, Allyn; but where is Alice?"

"Close at hand, and in trouble as usual," Allyn answered, laughing. "Look at the end of the board walk, Cis."

Cicely's glance and laugh were simultaneous.

" Poor fellow! He is evidently a new arrival, and he hasn't learned Quantuck styles of dressing," she observed.

Allyn glanced down at his own rough suit and shabby shoes.

"I might give him a few points," he suggested. "What's the fellow up to?"

On the very end of the narrow board walk was a stranger, young, good-looking and clothed in raiment better suited to Fifth Avenue than to Quantuck beach. His back was towards them; but he appeared to be contemplating his feet with a certain anxiety. Even while they watched him, he bent over, unlaced his shoes and pulled them off.

"Do you suppose he is esoteric, or anything, and does that in reverence for the sea?" Cicely demanded in a whisper.

Her question answered itself. Drawing a folded handkerchief from his pocket, the stranger rubbed from his shoes the high-water mark of Quantuck sand and dust. Then, treading lightly in his stocking feet, he went away up the beach, bearing his shoes in his hand.

Strange people appear and disappear at Quantuck, smiled at for the hour, but causing little comment. It was not until midday that Cicely bethought herself to speak of the stranger she had seen on the sand, that morning. She laughed suddenly at the memory of him.

"Hullo?" Harold said interrogatively.

"Pass me another sandwich, Mac, there's a

dear fellow," she requested. "I was only thinking of the man we saw on the beach, before breakfast."

Betty snatched a sandwich as they passed her.

"What about him?" she asked.

"His shoes, chiefly. They were beautiful ones; but they were dusty, so he had taken them off to clean them and was strolling up the walk in his pretty red stockings. Otherwise, he was clothed like Solomon in all his glory."

"I doubt if Solomon wore shoes," Hubert protested. "Do be accurate, Cis."

"Perhaps he is the man mamma is expecting," Betty suggested.

"Who is? Solomon?"

"No; the shoe man. I know there was something funny about him, for papa laughed so, when he heard that he was going to call, this afternoon."

"Who is it?" Percival inquired.

"A cousin of the people across the street from our house," Betty explained. "He likes mamma's books so much that they have given him a letter of introduction to her. It's nobody that she cares about, and it is too

bad for her to have to stay at home to see him."

"If it had only been a reporter, you could have interviewed him, Cis," Allyn suggested, for, upon one far-off day, Cicely had passed herself off as Mrs. Farrington, and supplied an unsuspecting reporter with astounding details in regard to her methods of work.

"Thank you, honey," she retorted; "but I'd much rather be here."

At Tatakis Neck, far on the west end of the island, they were gathered about a tablecloth spread on the sand. Five feet away, the clear green waves rolled up and broke in gentle, regular curves, one following another in monotonous order far different from the din and crash of Quantuck surf. The gulls dipped and rose again in their white-winged flight; to the northward, a line of white-winged ships told as surely as the quiet waves that they were as far from Quantuck village as the limits of the island would allow.

Soon after breakfast, that morning, a decorous surrey and a shabby box cart had departed from the Lodge. Hubert and Phebe, Allyn and Cicely had occupied the one, Betty and the three boys the other, while Theodora and

her husband waved a farewell from the door-steps.

"Shame you can't go!"

"That stupid man, to come, to-day!"

"If my boys behave too badly, just lock them up in the bathhouse."

"Oh, mamma, I do wish you were going!"

From far up the road, the voices drifted back to the Lodge. Then Harold nearly capsized the cart by driving into a gutter, and the attention became concentrated upon the day's expedition.

"Now, if you young things really have feasted to your hearts' content, I wish you would gather up the fragments," Phebe advised at last. "If we have any idea of going into the life-saving station, we must be moving."

Betty rose, crossed the narrow strip of sand and sat down beside her aunt.

"Let Mac do it," she said tranquilly. "I intend to sit here and help you think about Uncle Giff. Perhaps he is passing here now, and sending a thought to his disconsolate widow."

"More likely he is flat in his berth," Phebe responded. "The poor dear always was a bad

sailor. It is as much as he can do to cross Fulton Ferry without a catastrophe."

"What a sympathetic wife you are, Babe!" Allyn remarked from the spot near by, where he lay on his back, finishing the plums.

"For some things, yes; but I can't see the pathos of seasickness. My intellect tells me that it is tragic; but nevertheless it always seems to me broad farce."

"When Mrs. Barrett does succumb, may I be there to see!" Percival said fervently.

Phebe eyed him rebukingly.

"And was it for this that I gave you of my arnica and valerian bottles, Percival Ainslee! Where's your gratitude?"

"In my left breast pocket; but I left my coat in the buggy-wagon. Mac, I do wish you'd hurry."

"Don't pack the napkins in the jam tumbler," Betty ordered him. "They'll be stained."

Mac sat back on his heels and contemplated her disgustedly.

"How should I know how to pack your blasted trumpery?" he demanded. "Besides, I don't think it would be serious, if we did stain these things."

"What helpless creatures men are!" Cicely said, as she dropped down beside Mac and rescued the spoons from underneath a pile of plates. "You are a dear boy, Mac. You mean well; but I really wish you would help Allyn feed the horses and leave me to pack the baskets. You are better at unpacking."

"Of course I am; it's lots easier. All you have to do, is to dump them out," he explained, as he rose to go to Allyn's aid.

Inside the life-saving station, their joking mood ceased. Tatakis Neck is one of the danger points of the north Atlantic coast, and their sunburned, grave-eyed guide brought to them all a swift realization that there were other gatherings than summer picnics on that sandy shore. At first sight, there was nothing especially grim about the stanch little building. There were magazines on the table in the living-room, and, in the oak-ceiled dormitory above, a cross-eyed cat snoozed in the middle of one of the beds. But when they left the home end of the house and came into the huge boat-room, even Harold's nonsense was hushed, for everything here spoke of winter storm and wreck, of danger and bravery and of death. On a truck in the middle of the

room was the great lifeboat, ready at an instant's warning to be rushed to the beach. The little cannon and the weighted line coiled in its box for its one time of use, the life-car like a huge white torpedo, the grotesque outline of the breeches buoy, everything was spotless, everything in its place; yet everything gave a certain impression of having seen service, not the play-work of the afternoon drill, but the hand-to-hand tussle with wind and sleet and pounding wave. The very torches in the closet bore witness to the fact that Quantuck life was not altogether the life of the summer guest.

It was Hubert who finally coaxed the man to talk to them. Once his reserve was broken down, he told them stirring tales, stories of wild nights when he patrolled the beach, his nerves tense with watching for a signal of distress, of cruel storms when the surf beat back the lifeboat as they launched it, and the pitiless wind swerved the line from its true course, or the cable parted and let the life-car roll about at the mercy of the rolling waves.

And Theodora, meanwhile, sat on the veranda of the Lodge, trying hard to live up to

the ideals of the young man whom Cicely had seen on the beach, that morning.

From the steps, Billy had seen the elegant figure coming up the street, and he had sounded the note of alarm.

"War-paint ready, Ted? Here he comes!"

"Yes. Don't desert me, Billy."

"Never!"

There was the shuffle of feet outside, then the sound of voices and of moving chairs, and Mr. Farrington came into the house.

"Theodora, my dear, Mr. Myers has come," he said blandly. Then he added, in a hurried whisper, "Don't be too hard on the poor little thing."

As Theodora stepped out on the veranda, she was conscious of a sudden wild desire to laugh. In a sense, she had never been able to take herself entirely in earnest. Her work was a different matter; she believed in it implicitly, believed in the ideals she was always struggling to attain. But her work was an end in itself, not a means to the end of her personal glorification. When once her books were finished, she immediately lost interest in them and paid scant heed to their probable effect upon her reputation. For this reason,

she always turned restive when well-meaning strangers attempted to catechise her about her work. For this reason, too, she was no friend of the lion-hunter. Her personality was her own, a thing apart from her books; it had never been Theodora's habit to pose before the gaze of an impersonal public.

Tall and stately and dressed in a soft light gown which swept the floor at her feet, she paused on the threshold, smiling at the eagerness with which her guest rose to greet her. Even while she was touching his outstretched hand, her trained eye assured her that he was very young, very callow, very immaculate in his dress. Moreover, she suspected that he was even capable of taking the arm of the woman with whom he went to walk.

"Mrs. Farrington?" he said, with an interrogative note in his voice, while he bent his body until she feared lest he might be stricken with vertigo.

"I am Mrs. Farrington," she assented. "You are Mrs. Mansfield's cousin, I know. Have you heard from her lately?"

"Last week. She sent me the letter. You don't know how glad I am to meet you," he returned exuberantly.

For one instant, Theodora's eyes sought those of her husband. Then she answered gravely,—

"Thank you. I hope you like Quantuck, Mr. Myers."

But Mr. Myers refused to be diverted from the subject uppermost in his mind.

"I never had the pleasure of talking to an authoress before. I was so interested, when Cousin Clara wrote me you were at Quantuck. She writes of you often, you know. You can't think how I have been enjoying your story in *The Domestic Diary*."

"*The—Domestic Diary!*" Theodora gasped, as she suddenly shifted her chair to a position whence she could not meet her husband's dancing eyes.

"Yes, the one running now, *The Intrepid Heart*. I like it even better than I did *The Oath of the Stricken*. I never could see, though, how a woman was able to write either one of them."

There was a short silence. Then Theodora gathered together her courage and dealt her blow as gently as she was able.

"I think this must be a case of mistaken identity," she said, with a real regret for the

crestfallen face of her guest. "Haven't you confused me with my namesake, Mrs. Jack Farrington who writes under the pen-name of Violet Burbank?"

"He is a good little fellow, Billy," Theodora observed, as she and her husband watched the departing guest. "He will be more guileful, when he is older. The mistake wasn't such an unnatural one, after all. It was so hard to undeceive him; but I couldn't sail under false colors. But—*The Domestic Diary!*"

Her husband laughed unfeelingly.

"A judgment upon you for scorning such magazines! Poor Ted! It was quite evident that he had never heard of you; his incense was intended for another shrine. It must have taken all your courage to disown it. What brought him to Quantuck, in the first place?"

"Not myself, alas! Not even the Violet Burbank he fondly imagined me. He is visiting that Mrs. Peck in The Aquarium, so we aren't likely to see him often, unless he blunders in here by mistake. He told me the houses here are so alike that he can't tell one from another. Think of that, after a New York block!"

The young man, however, was not altogether dense. His call had not been a long one; but it had been long enough to assure him that Theodora Farrington was a woman, not merely of wit and genius, but of genuine kindliness as well. After her first natural enjoyment of the situation, she had set about putting him at his ease, with a womanly graciousness which had won his heart completely. In spite of his mortification, he had gone away, feeling the better for his hour at the Lodge, and vaguely hoping that chance might lead him there again. Happily for himself, however, he could not foresee the nature of that chance.

CHAPTER TWELVE

BETTY FARRINGTON was not a girl to stand still. Motion in one direction or another was inevitable to her. Roused by her mother's rebuke from her increasing neglect of Percival, she now went to the other extreme and included him in most of her plans, until even generous Mac was occasionally moved to wish the boy elsewhere. However, this betokened no great self-sacrifice on Betty's part. Rather to her surprise, she was discovering that, now she really knew Percival, he no longer antagonized her. On the other hand, she was finding the commonplace-looking boy a most enjoyable comrade, and she was glad, all things considered, that Fate, in the person of Mrs. Van Hicks, had brought him to Quantuck, that summer.

Together they strolled down to the beach, one morning less than a week after the drive to Tatakis Neck. Under the awning, they found Phebe and Cicely deep in conversation.

"I think I should know it, if I saw it," Cicely was saying. "I had a pot of it in my dining-room window, all last winter."

"When can you go?" Phebe demanded.

"How far is it?"

"Nine miles at least, seven to Town and about two from there."

"It would take a whole afternoon," Cicely demurred. "May Allyn go, too?"

Phebe shook her head.

"No. He scoffed at the idea and said it probably was nothing but potato tops. We'd better go alone, Cis."

"Why are you so anxious to go?" Cicely asked, as she idly watched the collection of sand fleas strolling about in her lap.

"Because I want to prove I am right."

"But suppose you are wrong?"

"It's not a supposable case," Phebe replied tranquilly. "Therefore my soul is set upon exulting over the fan-tan lady."

"There is always the bare possibility that the fan-tan lady may exult over you," Cicely suggested.

Phebe smacked her lips.

"Let her!" she said pugnaciously.

"What are you two women plotting?"

Betty asked gayly, as she and Percival threw themselves down under the awning.

"What an unexpected appearing, Betty! You should give a low, shrill whistle to warn us of your approach. You may hear uncomplimentary remarks about yourself, you know, if you take us unawares."

"I'm not afraid," Betty returned calmly. "I don't mind uncomplimentary remarks that aren't true. What are you concocting, with your two naughty heads together? I know it was something bad, you look so guilty."

"Nothing more criminal than a ride, this afternoon," Phebe said, thus basely capturing Cicely's consent to her plan.

"Where? Maybe we'll go, too, if you urge us. Percival is riding again, and you really ought to invite him."

"No; we are going just by our lonesomes. I haven't had Cicely to myself since she came."

"What about now?" Betty asked shrewdly. "Where are you going?"

"Over towards Stormcrest."

"What for? It is so stupid, that way."

Phebe was silent; but a light dawned upon Betty.

"Oh, I know. You are going for more heather," she exclaimed.

"Yes, Cis says she should know it."

"Why haven't you asked Mac? He'd be sure to tell you."

Without troubling herself to move her head, Phebe rolled her eyes towards Betty.

"Because I didn't quite däss," she answered.

"Aunt Phebe, do you mean that you are going to give in? After setting Quantuck by the ears, are you going to give up your faith in the heather? I thought better of you than that."

Phebe rose.

"No!" she snapped; "I'm not. It is heather, and all the cranks in creation can't convince me that it isn't. If they're so sure, why don't they produce the genuine article?"

Left to themselves, Betty and Percival looked at each other and laughed irreverently. Then Percival asked,

"What's the row?"

"The war of the heather. Haven't you heard of it? The week you came, Aunt Babe and I found something we both took for the famous heather that grows here. We felt rather smart about it, and Aunt Babe gave

scraps of it to all her friends to send to their friends as souvenirs of the place. It must have spread from Seattle to Constantinople, by this time, and she reaped a whole harvest of thanks. Everybody had heard of it, and everybody wanted a piece. Then all at once a few unpleasant people said it wasn't heather. Since then, everybody has been arguing with everybody else, till the whole place is in a muddle about it. Aunt Babe takes it hard. She doesn't enjoy making mistakes, and I have an idea that she thinks she may have made one now."

"What do you think?"

"Me? I don't know."

"Would you know it again?"

"Of course I should. Why?"

Percival laughed in obvious self-approval.

"I happen to know where the stuff grows; that's all."

"How do you know?"

"One of the fishermen told me. I used to be alone on the beach a good deal at first, and we talked together. I didn't pay much attention, because I didn't care for the stuff. Funny I never heard about Mrs. Barrett's caring!" He whistled softly to himself.

"Well?" Betty demanded.

"Well what?"

"You have an idea."

"I hope so. They come in handy sometimes, and it sounds better to have one now and then."

"Percival Ainslee, stop teasing and tell me."

"It's this way," he said, as he rose and stood leaning against the awning post; "Mrs. Barrett has been no end good to me, fussing at my wrist and all that, and I shouldn't mind doing her a good turn. What are you going to do, this afternoon?"

"Nothing especial."

"Then right after dinner I'll come for you. Don't say anything about it to Mrs. Barrett or Miss Everard. We'll go straight over to the place the man told me; if we find anything there that looks like heather, we'll go after Mrs. Barrett and let her get it for herself. Unless the man lied, she is going to pick heather, to-day."

"Where is the place?"

Percival bent down to whisper, for there were people standing near.

"Really? Really and truly? That is only a mile from where we found it before."

"Well, we'll try it. Then, if she finds it, we'll go off and leave her to come home alone, so she can get all the glory. You'll be ready?"

"Going over to Town with Percival?" Mrs. Farrington said, when Betty announced her plan. "I am so glad, for now I can send my story over there to be mailed. I always hate to put manuscripts into a little post office; they seem so very conspicuous. You can take it; can't you, Betty?"

"Of course. I always feel very important to be carrying your things about," Betty replied gayly. "Is it a very tearful one, mamma?"

Theodora laughed.

"Not so tearful as it would have been, if you hadn't ruined my climax by boiling sugar all over the kitchen stove, and invading my artistic frenzy with your frightful odors."

"We shall have to hurry, Percival," Betty said, as they rode away from the Lodge. "Aunt Babe and Cousin Cicely are to start in an hour, and we must overtake them before they get to Stormcrest. I ought to stop in Town; but I'll wait till we are on the way home."

Two hours later, Phebe rose from the ground.

"Percival, my aid and comfort," she proclaimed; "at last I am ready to sing my *Nunc Dimittis*, and you are the sole cause of my content. Pray, accept my blessing!"

Percival laughed, as he glanced down at the knot of purple spikes which Betty had just fastened into his buttonhole.

"It's about an even thing," he observed. "You have made some difference in my summer, Mrs. Barrett. Come, Betty, let's start on ahead."

Back in Town once more, they loitered about the quaint old streets and along the grass-grown water front, once the landing-place of many a laden whaler. It was the first time Percival had seen the place by day, and, like every one else, he yielded to its fascination. It was not until the shadows of the masts lay long across the still water of the harbor that they turned away and reluctantly set their faces towards home. Half-way across the moors, Betty stopped abruptly.

"I forgot to mail mamma's letter!" she exclaimed.

Percival turned around.

"We can go back. I think there will be time before dark."

Betty plunged her hand into her pocket. Then she grew white.

"It's gone! I've lost it!"

Instinctively they looked back. As far as they could see, the road stretched away in long perspective, unbroken by any oblong patch of white paper. Percival shook his head.

"It isn't of much use to go back," he said regretfully. "We have been over half the island, Betty, and nobody knows where it is. Was it something important?"

"It was—a story—a new story." Betty's voice was a bit unsteady.

"If it was stamped, anybody who found it would mail it," he said hopefully. "I think we'd better go home, Betty. Really, it is no use to hunt for it."

"Oh, I can't go home! I can't tell mamma!" she burst out.

"Why not?"

"I just can't. It isn't like an ordinary letter, Percival. You don't know how she cares for her stories, when she has just been working on them. She couldn't stand it to have

one of them lost. I'm not going to tell her. She won't ask, and I needn't say anything about it."

Percival looked at her in surprise. As she met his glance, she suddenly became conscious of the disappointment in his grey eyes.

"What's the trouble?" she asked irritably.

His answer was blunt.

"Seems to me I wouldn't fib about a little thing like that."

The word stung her. In her woe over the lost manuscript, it had not occurred to her how far she was swerving in this, her first departure from absolute truth.

"It's not fibbing," she retorted.

"It's mighty near it."

"Not if the thing isn't mentioned," she argued.

He made no answer.

"It's not a lie," she repeated.

For a moment, he watched a passing drove of cows. Then he turned his eyes towards her again. This time, they showed scorn mingled with the disappointment.

"That's according to the way you look at it," he replied coolly. "Shall we go home?"

Betty assented sullenly, and they went on

in a silence which lasted for a mile or two. Betty broke it.

"She is going out to supper, anyway, and she won't be back till late," she grumbled defensively.

Percival neither spoke nor turned his head, and they rode along for another mile. Then Betty's brow suddenly cleared. Pushing back her ruffled, sunshiny hair, she turned frankly to Percival.

"I'm a beast," she said penitently; "and I need you to lecture me. Honestly, I never did that kind of thing before, and I hope I sha'n't again. I don't like to lie, and I don't mean to. Till you spoke, I didn't see just what I was doing."

"Well, as long as you see it now, there's no especial harm done," he replied philosophically. "I never noticed that any one ever was able to get herself out of a mess by fibbing, though."

Late that same evening, Phebe paid her first and only visit of the season to the fan-tan lady.

"Oh, Mrs. Van Hicks," she said, with an affability which her hostess should have recognized as a new note in the chord of Phebe's

hostility; "I went out after heather again, to-day, and brought in quite a large bunch of it. It's the real, true heather, this time, and not the little *polygala* I found before." And, mentally fortified by the results of Mac's analysis, she placed a dozen purplish spikes upon the table. Then she gave Percival something dangerously akin to a wink of triumph and stalked away out of the room.

Betty had returned, the afternoon before, to find a note from her mother, saying that she would be late home and advising Betty to go to bed early. It had been a white night for Betty. She was haunted by the lost manuscript, and by the memory of the look of scorn and disappointment which she had seen in Percival's honest eyes. It hurt her to have Percival look at her like that, especially when she was quite aware of the fact that she richly merited his scorn. She rose early and went out to the veranda to consider the matter.

Some time afterwards, she was roused by the clashing of a bell and a boyish call. She looked up to see Percival flying down the road, waving a long white envelope in his hand.

"Them um?" he inquired breathlessly, as he tumbled off his wheel beside the steps.

"Oh, you blessed youth! Where did you find it?"

"Out on the Stormcrest road, where you stopped to tie your shoe. Is it all right?"

"Yes. What time did you get up? How did you ever remember where to look? Aren't you starved to death, to take such a ride before breakfast?"

"I didn't mind, for I couldn't seem to sleep. Now take it in to your mother and 'fess up, Betty."

And Betty obediently departed.

"Couldn't sleep, Percival? What's that for?" Mrs. Barrett inquired, coming out to the veranda of Valhalla.

Percival transferred himself to her steps, and sat down with his chin moodily resting in the palms of his hands.

"I'm all upset in my mind," he announced gloomily.

"What's the matter?"

"My aunt is going to close Traümerei, and I'm to be sent to the hotel."

"Oh! Why?"

"She has just had a bid to a house party at Newport, and she thinks it is going to be very fine. She didn't know what to do with me at

first, as long as our house in Chicago is closed; but it finally occurred to her that she could pack me off to the hotel. She is going to pay my board, though," he added, with boyish scorn.

"That's generous of her, very generous," Phebe commented, as she sat down at his side. "I'm not at all sure I should have expected it of her. How soon does she go?"

"Next Monday."

"Hm! When does your mother come home?"

"Not for three weeks, three mortal weeks!" There was a desperate ring to the words.

Phebe pondered over the situation. Then she said, in the off-hand way he liked so well,—

"They have pickled pigs' feet and egg plant for supper at the hotel, and you would probably die of that, even if you are a boy. Now see here, Percival, why don't you come and stay with me? With Mr. Barrett gone, and the Lodge people going, next week, I shall be as lonesome as a stray cat. The children get on well with you, and you will make somebody for me to scold, when the fire smokes and the dinner is bad. I shall be here for a month

longer; I really wish you would come and keep me company."

She watched his face keenly, while she spoke; then, sure of his pleasure, she rose abruptly, cutting short his thanks.

"Then it is settled. Go home to breakfast. Your bell is ringing, and there isn't enough of our porridge to go round. Good-bye, my adopted son!"

Inside the house, Phebe halted and gave way to the untrammelled speech which always left her family aghast and wondering whence she had gathered her vocabulary.

"Oh, the mean old hunks!" she said slowly.

Then, refreshed, she went to breakfast.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"WHERE'S your hat, Betty? You may find it useful in case of rain."

"Here. I'm sitting on it for safe keeping. Did you surely put in the stuffed olives?"

"Yes."

"And the cheese straws?"

"Yes, everything, even to two dozen stout boiled eggs, warranted to give us all indyspeption. Where is the ice pail?"

"It's here. Harold's feet are on top of the sandwiches!"

"Uncle Allyn, you take the reins, while I count," Mac said. "One, four, five boxes, two pails, a jug and the fish basket. Three fish-poles. Tackle for same. Three golf capes, ten sofa pillows and a mackintosh. Betty, what the mischief is this thing?"

"Oh, that's the old barometer, the broken one."

"What for?"

"Because I wasn't sure of the weather, and

this won't budge from *fair*. I thought it might be encouraging, in case we were caught in a shower."

"Oh. Is there any other little piece of furniture you'd like to put in? If not, I think we'll start."

"Remember you must be back in time to dress for dinner at seven," Theodora warned them. "The Baldwins are coming, and I want everything to go off well."

"My youngsters are bidden to a party at Ethel Latimer's, to-night," Phebe remarked, as they drove away. "They are rejoicing because it is a late affair, six to eight. I hear that Ted's Myers man is to be there. Mrs. Latimer says he is quite a ventriloquist, and in great demand for children's parties. She knows him in New York."

The summer had hurried away and, two days later, the Lodge would be deserted, so for most of them the day's expedition was of the nature of a farewell frolic. It was Betty's doing. She had ordained that they should have a box-cart party to Quiddum Pond where they should fish, to Wanatonnet where they should eat their luncheon, and home over the charred moorland by David's Hills. There

had been a shout of derision when the shabby green box and the two lean horses had stopped at the steps of the Lodge; but Betty had piled cushions in the flat bottom of the cart, tied a crisp pink bow on the stubby whip and announced herself as ready for the start.

Theodora had declined to go with them, on plea of preparing for her guests, two noted actors who invariably appeared at Quantuck before the season was quite over. Hubert had chosen to stay with her; but otherwise the Lodge party was out in full force and augmented by Phebe and Percival. In spite of Harold's protestations, Mac held the reins. Harold's sense of humor included a whole-souled enjoyment of feminine shrieks, and although it takes a good deal of energy to tip over a box-cart, the rutted, boulder-strewn roads do not make for easy riding in a springless vehicle. Betty sat on the seat beside Mac to show him the way; Percival sat on the other side of him, to keep him, he claimed, from falling out.

Mr. Farrington groaned, as he settled his long person in the bottom of the cart.

"Oh, Betty girl, this is cruelty to animals,"

he protested. "Why couldn't we have gone in a civilized stage coach?"

"You'd have missed all the local color," she said decidedly. "It wouldn't have been at all suitable. When you are in Quantuck, you must do——"

"But they don't," her father interrupted. "Fancy old Mr. Robert Drayton riding off to Town in this indecorous fashion! Besides, if you are so fond of local color, why don't you get down here into the full glare of it? I don't want to be selfish; I'm willing to sit on a mere commonplace seat."

"Shame grandpa isn't here!" Mac said regretfully.

"I thought he was coming," Percival returned.

"So he was, and grandma, too." Betty glanced over her shoulder to assure herself that, in the very tail of the cart, Allyn was absorbed in talking to Cicely. "It is very mysterious. We had a letter from grandma, a week ago, and she said that grandpa couldn't come, and that she didn't like to leave him alone with the engine."

"The—angel?" Percival's tone bristled with interrogation points.

Betty's laugh rang out gayly.

"Anything but that! You see," she lowered her voice; "Uncle Allyn has invented a new engine, something to pump up water. He has had one put into our house and one into The Savins, for both places are higher than the reservoir. That is what grandma means; but I really can't see why she is afraid to leave grandpa with it. It can't bite."

"It may explode," Percival suggested reassuringly.

"Oh, no; it wouldn't. Uncle Allyn says it is perfectly safe."

"How long do you expect to be at home?"

"Only a week. We aren't going to open our house at all; we are going to The Savins, instead. Just think! It will be almost Christmas before I am at home again."

To Betty's enthusiastic eyes, the morning seemed created for their especial benefit. The sun was bright; but a damp east wind came in from the sea, and the open box-cart was none too warm. Far away over the water, a fog bank hung low; otherwise the air was crystal-clear and, as they came up the cliff by the lighthouse, they were able to make out

the faint shape of the lightship, far in the offing.

The lean horses jogged and the moments flew along. Mr. Farrington and Cicely had mounted the seat, and Betty and Harold sat in the tail of the cart, their feet hanging out, as they drove down the hill to the little hotel at Wanatonnet. There had been adventures on the way thither. Mac had been jolted out of his seat in the end of the cart, and had parted with a good share of the skin on one side of his nose; Allyn had reduced the peaches to marmalade by sitting on them, and Harold, wading into Quiddum Pond in pursuit of lilies for Cicely, had mislaid his stockings and was obliged to continue his journey without them. However, it was an hilarious party who scrambled out of the cart and stood stretching themselves, while Mr. Farrington made arrangements for the care of the horses.

"Now whither, Betty?" he asked, as he joined them again.

"To the Haulover," she replied promptly, while she laid forcible hands on the basket which held the stuffed olives.

Straight out from Wanatonnet runs a long,

narrow sandspit. On the one side of it is the quiet water of the harbor; on the other, only a few feet away, the ocean surf beats heavily. A third of the way out to the end, the land narrows almost to a line, where the fishermen in old days shortened their trip to Town by rowing up on the seaward side, hauling their dories across and rowing away over the harbor. Then the sea broke through, one stormy time, and now only the name is left to mark the ancient custom.

The lunch tasted good, out on that narrow sandspit with the surf pounding and the ripples plashing, not ten feet apart. After driving over the moors in the rutted roads or in no roads at all, even pilot bread and green tea would have seemed succulent, much more so the dainty lunch which Theodora had prepared. They had just reached the point of drinking her health, when Mr. Farrington pointed towards the distant lighthouse.

"I don't want to hurry you youngsters," he said; "but I don't like the look of things over there. The fog is coming up fast, and I think we'd better be getting home, before it catches us."

Phebe glanced over her shoulder, and her

face grew grave. She had learned the ways of Quantuck fogs, and she knew that it was not well to be caught wandering over the moors, when the thick mist came rolling in.

"Hurry up, children!" she said briskly. "No time for eating now. We must get these things packed and over to the hotel, by the time the horses are ready."

"But I know the barometer says *fair*," Betty objected. "Truly, Aunt Babe, it isn't going to amount to anything."

"Perhaps not; but we don't care to take any risks," Mrs. Barrett said so decidedly that even Harold left off eating and fell to work.

"Which way shall we go back, Billy?" Allyn asked, as they hurriedly packed their belongings into the cart.

Mr. Farrington hesitated.

"It's harder driving; but it is much shorter, the way we came. I think we'll take our chances on getting ahead of the fog."

By the time they were really started on their homeward drive, the fog was almost upon them. A haze had hidden the sun, and lank banners of mist floated low in the air, sparse at first, then thicker and more thick until, almost before they realized the change,

they were driving blindly along through an opaque white atmosphere. It was some time, however, before it dawned upon Betty and the boys that the chatter and the joking were confined entirely to their corner of the cart; but at length they too fell silent. Mr. Farrington held the reins; but, as the moments went on, he was able to do little more than steady the horses in case of an occasional stumble. Ten feet ahead of them, the road was invisible; even the ears of the horses were draped with a filmy white veil of mist.

All at once he drew in the reins.

"Well," he asked quietly; "what next?"

"Why, home, of course," Harold suggested politely.

"Shut up!" Mac ordered him, just as his uncle replied,—

"Exactly; but which way is home?"

"Papa!"

"Betty!"

"Don't you really know?"

If Mr. Farrington was uneasy, at least there was no trace of the fact in his voice.

"No, my dear. Do you?"

"Are we lost?"

"Oh, no, Betty; we are here. It's Quantuck that is lost," Cicely reassured her.

"That's what I mean. What shall we do?"

"Does anybody happen to have a compass?" Allyn asked.

"Apparently not; but there is Betty's barometer," Mac said, after an interval of silence. "Really, Uncle Billy, don't you even know the direction?"

"Not after following these crisscross roads for half an hour."

"I don't see any manner of use in sitting here, though," Phebe objected. "If we go on, we shall get somewhere or other, from sheer lack of space to stray in. It isn't as if we were on an island the size of Madagascar."

"Very well, if you will take the risk, Babe. We may be headed straight for Tatakis, for anything I know to the contrary."

"That will give us something definite to start from, anyway," she retorted grimly.

Their progress was slow. The lean horses trudged and stubbed and slipped along courageously; the green cart bounced and jolted and scraped. Conversation had started up once more; but it was rather forced and

jerky. All at once, Percival threw up his head and listened.

"Stop!" he cried sharply.

"For why?" Mr. Farrington asked; but he pulled up the horses, as he spoke.

"I hear surf straight ahead of us. Listen!"

In the silence that followed, they wondered that they all had not heard the dull boom of the surf which came to them, apparently from their very feet. Percival started up.

"Mr. Farrington, you stay here with Mrs. Barrett and Miss Everard and Betty. The rest of us will go to explore."

"I'll go, too. The horses will stand."

"No; we want somebody to call to us, so we can't lose ourselves. I'll go ahead. Mr. McAlister, will you go to the right, and Harold and Mac to the left?"

Mr. Farrington looked around at him approvingly.

"Smart boy, sonny! Don't get too far away in the fog. We should hate to lose you, just as we are finding out what you are good for."

"I found it out, some time ago," Betty said, as he stepped past her. "Don't you want me to go with you?"

"If you like." But his smile was more inviting than his words.

"May I, papa?"

"Yes, if you won't do anything especially rash. Look out for her, Percival."

As the white mist shut down about them, Percival took Betty's hand in his. They went forward slowly, stumbling a little now and then, but always keeping a straight course towards the surf. It was louder now and close at their feet, so they moved cautiously on until, thirty yards from the horses' heads, Betty sprang backward and pulled Percival after her. Walking straight into the blinding fog, she had stopped herself just at the verge of the cliff. Turning, they started to retrace their steps, when, close at hand, they heard a thud and a sound of some heavy body sliding. With every nerve tense, Betty waited for the cry which should follow; but none came.

"It's Uncle Allyn!" she said, and even as she spoke, she wondered why her voice sounded so hoarse in her own ears. "He has fallen over the cliff."

Percival's hand shut hard upon hers. Then he shouted,—

"Mr. McAlister!"

"Yes." The voice came from below them; but it was surprisingly cheerful.

"Where are you?"

"Ten feet down the cliff. This beastly bank caved in under me."

"Can you get up?"

"I don't know. I'm not in a position where I like to try many experiments, for I haven't the least longing to slide down the rest of the way."

"How are we going to fish you up, I'd like to know," the boy said ruefully.

"Oh, don't trouble yourselves about that. I'm perfectly comfortable where I am, and I'm not likely to run away. A piece of the bank came off. It has lodged here, and I lodged with it."

"Hm! Ten feet down?"

"Call it seven, if you'd rather. That is too far for my perfect satisfaction, though."

"Uncle Allyn, do stop joking; it's dreadful!" Betty said desperately. "What can we do?"

"Put a charge of dynamite under me," her uncle advised gravely.

But Percival took command.

"Betty, you go towards the cart. It is

somewhere over there. Don't you go out of hearing of my voice; but keep calling your father. Ask him to come here, please."

"And bring one of the fishpoles," Allyn added.

"Can we make a string of ourselves, Mr. Farrington?" Percival asked, as he saw the tall figure come striding through the mist.

"What about your wrist?"

"It will have to stand it," he replied coolly.

"It can't. Mrs. Barrett would never forgive you, if you strained it now. She is very proud of her surgery. Can't we get Mac here?"

"Too much trouble to hunt him up."

"Stick out your foot, and let papa hold on to that," Betty advised.

"Good idea, Betty! It's not orthodox, nor very graceful; but it will work. Are you ready, Percival? Now then, Allyn!"

There was a tug, a scramble and a scrape. Then Allyn's head came in sight, followed by a clay-coated body. Mr. Farrington looked him over in amusement.

"Pretty boy, Allyn! Next time, don't play so near the edge. Now where the mischief is the cart?"

A lusty roar from Harold supplied the answer to the question, and the party once more assembled itself within sight of each other.

"What did you find, Uncle Allyn?" Mac asked, as he saw the figures taking shape in the mist before him.

Allyn gravely turned himself about for inspection.

"I found a soft spot to rest in," he answered; "but your Uncle Billy insisted upon dragging me out of it."

"We know more than you, then. We're on the cliff, close to Rand's Castle. If you lead the horses ten feet to the left, you'll find the road that comes out at the links."

That evening, one of the prettiest dinners of the season was served at the Lodge, and Theodora, at the head of her dainty table, was feeling quite content with the feast she had spread in honor of her famous guests. From Phebe to Harold, her family were well-dressed, well-bred, well-informed. From the beach below sounded the hoarse roar of the surf; from the house next door came the merry chatter of the children's party; from her own table came a swift, low buzz of talk. They talked of Quantuck ways and days, of the recent fire, of this

fog remarkable even in a land of heavy fogs. Then they held their peace, for there came a sudden and unlooked-for interruption.

Five minutes earlier, the maid had answered a knock at the outside door. She had found there a stranger in evening dress, and he had smiled upon her blandly.

"They are all here, then?" he asked.

The maid looked astonished at the question. There had been no vacant place at the table, yet obviously here was another guest.

"Yes, sir. They are in the dining-room," she assented.

"That's good. They are expecting me; but I think I'll give them a bit of a surprise."

The maid was astonished before. Now she was astounded. Passing his hat and rain-coat to her, the guest dropped down on his hands and knees and, in this unseemly posture, took an experimental turn about the living-room. In the maid's own phrase, she was too conflummuxed to summon her master, and her conflummuxment allowed the scene to draw to its destined close. From the next room, there came the soft glow of shaded lamps, the soft murmur of voices, while the guest paused to gather together his forces. Then, still in

his unseemly posture, he uttered a resounding bray and went charging madly into the next room, where he came to a sudden abashed halt at the very hem of Theodora's long white gown.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"FROM Quantuck to Quitclaim! You sound like the title of a book, a globe-trotter's book," Phebe observed.

"Yes, and you ought to open your book with a treatise on Indian versus Saxon names," Allyn added.

They were gathered on the wharf at Town, waiting for the steamer which was to carry the Farringtons and their guests away from the island. Allyn was to stay with Mrs. Barrett for two weeks longer; but they had come over to see the travellers off. Grouped around the miscellaneous pile of their luggage, they were laughing and chattering gayly while, a little apart from the rest, Betty and Percival were talking quietly together.

Inasmuch as Quantuck has fashions all its own, this was the first time that Percival had seen Betty in the dress of the conventional outer world, and he liked the change. From her blue tailor-made suit and blue and white

silk waist to the plain straw hat with its blue band and the low-heeled shoes, she was trim and simple and dainty. He looked down at her animated face framed in its bright hair, and his own sunburned face grew rather wishful.

"It's too bad you have to go," he said regretfully.

"I'm sorry. It has been one of the best summers I've ever spent here. Still, there's Montana, you know, and another summer will be here before we know it."

"Not for me."

"Aren't you coming to Quantuck, next year?"

"I'm not likely to."

The color rushed to her cheeks.

"Why —— When will I see you again, then?"

"I don't know. Sometime, I hope. We've had great times together, Betty."

"But we must meet again; we are bound to," she said sturdily, although something very like tears glittered in her eyes. "It would be all head and no tail, if we didn't. We are only just beginning to know each other."

He smiled without speaking.

"It never occurred to me you wouldn't be here, next year. You must come back; it won't be half the fun without you," she persisted.

"Honestly? I didn't suppose you would care."

Betty faced him steadily, her wide-open eyes looking straight into his. There was no self-consciousness in her manner, no hint of budding coquetry. With a friend like Percival, it mattered not to her whether he was boy or girl.

"Don't you care?" she demanded.

"Yes, of course; but that's different."

"How different?"

"There are such a lot of you, and I was only one. If it hadn't been for you, Betty Farrington, I should have died, this summer. My aunt has gone now, so it can't do any harm for me to say so. I was——" He checked himself. "Well, never mind; it's over. I have always hated my name, and now I hate it worse than ever."

"It must have been dreadful," Betty said sympathetically. "I didn't dare say anything; but you didn't seem just her kind, and then your wrist and all. I'm sorry, sorriest of all

because I wasn't always as nice to you as I might have been."

Then they were silent for a time, while the merry, fragmentary talk went on around them. Children though they were, and friends of but one summer's standing, they were finding it unexpectedly hard to say good-bye. Suddenly Betty spoke again.

"I owe you something for what you have done for me, Percival. The fire was one thing, and there was another I don't much like to think of, the day I lost the story out on the moors." Then she changed her tone. "Anyway, when you're in college, I shall hear of you from Mac, especially if you room together."

But Theodora had joined them, as they stood apart from the others.

"Perhaps you can hear more directly than that, Betty. I don't want to lose sight of you, Percival. I'm a busy woman; but I wish you would write to me now and then. When I answer the letters, Betty may like to tuck in an occasional note."

The boy's face lighted.

"You're a queen of trumps, Mrs. Farrington. I'd like nothing better. You and Mrs. Barrett

and Betty have made a new fellow of me, the last few weeks. Some day, I hope my mother can thank you. I'd like you to know her."

Theodora smiled at the unconscious emphasis on the last word. She was at no loss to interpret it, for again and again during the summer she had seen the boy wince at the vagaries of his grandaunt. All at once she resolved to be quite honest.

"Percival," she said, with a merry frankness which was a relief to him; "we can't help our relatives. We can pick out our friends; but our relations are born-so, and we aren't responsible for them. Mrs. Van Hicks is a kind, good woman; but none of us who have really known you, this summer, have thought for one instant that your mother was like her."

The boy's eyes met hers with a frankness equal to her own.

"I'm no end glad of it," he said briefly.

When the moment came to go on board the steamer, every one wondered why all the good-byes had been left unsaid till then. In the flurry and confusion, Betty turned to Percival and held out both hands to him.

"Good-bye," she said. "I am so glad we

have had this summer, and I'm sure it won't be long before we see each other again."

Mrs. Barrett and Allyn stepped back, as the steamer cast off, and Percival was left alone at the end of the wharf. He watched the blue suit and the bright hair by the rail, as long as he could distinguish them; then he turned away with a deep, unconscious sigh.

"I wish she had stayed," he said to himself forlornly. "I meant to have had her teach me to tread water before she went. And now there's nobody in particular left."

And then Phebe swept down upon him and carried him home to an extra good dinner.

"But the first chapter isn't a treatise; it's a tragedy," Theodora remarked, an hour later.

It was one of the bright, windy days of mid-September, and the waves were dancing high around the little steamer. Spray splashed even against the closed panes of the pilot-house, the rail made every possible angle with the skyline, and the passengers, as a rule, made no angle at all with the deck. Woe was everywhere, that serio-comic woe which accompanies a rough day at sea. Harold yielded promptly to its spell, and was invisible until the pier was in sight; but Betty and Mac

pervaded the boat, hilarious, exasperatingly well, and only reluctant to have the voyage so soon over and to find themselves in the hot, dusty train, settled for the six-hour ride to The Savins.

At The Savins, the year had come to its full perfection and had paused awhile to exult in its own beauty. The huge old trees and the cropped lawn were green with the fresh, bright tint of early June; but the flower beds were crammed with asters and many-hued zinnias and tangles of vivid nasturtiums that climbed on the fences and sprawled on the ground and ran riot everywhere. The red house itself was garlanded with wreaths of fragrant honeysuckle whose rank growth attracted all the hummingbirds of the neighborhood to revel in its sweets.

The breakfast-room had been transformed into a bower, one morning, a day or two after the Farringtons reached The Savins. The table was covered with blossoms, the sideboard was heaped with them, and fifteen great white roses were tied to the back of Betty's chair, for this was Betty's fifteenth birthday. After the breakfast was ended, with its flowers and its gifts and its merry clamor of congratula-

tion, Betty wandered out to the lawn east of the house, and sat down on the grass to think the matter over. Fifteen was a great age. It might bring great responsibilities in its train. Likewise, it was in order to make some good resolutions.

A dozen robins were hopping about, suggestively eyeing a lawn-spray close by, and Betty took the hint and rose to turn on the water. Then she dropped back again, laughing to see the birds come in twos and threes, perky sparrows of all kinds, four or five great orioles and the stout, dignified robins who eyed the sparrows askance and took their baths sedately in a group by themselves.

"Well, Betty girl, a penny for your thoughts!"

"They are worth a lot more than that, mamma," she answered, as Theodora sat down on the grass beside her. "Where are the others?"

"Grandpa and the boys are in the office, and grandma is running the engine."

"What?" Betty's tone was incredulous.

"Yes. It does sound a funny thing for her to do; but she says that if The Savins is to be blown up, she would rather it would be

done by a loving hand. Listen!" Theodora added, as a sound of bumping and hiccoughing made itself heard, low and slow at first, then faster, louder and more ominous.

"Mamma! And must we have one of those things?"

Theodora laughed.

"They say it really isn't as bad as it sounds, Betty, and it will be good to have all the water we can use. Besides, a good company never would have taken this up, if it hadn't been safe."

"But the paper said it was noiseless," Betty objected. Then she dropped the subject. "Mamma," she said abruptly; "I wish I weren't so old."

"Why not, dear?"

"Oh, I just love to be a girl; it's such fun. But when I grow up, I'd rather be a man. Men amount to so much more. I don't mean you; you write books. We can't all do that, though, and the rest of us don't count for much."

"I used to feel something like that, Betty," her mother said, with the thoughtful courtesy she invariably showed to Betty's opinions. "Now I am not so sure of it. In fact, I think we women count for a good deal."

"I don't," Betty said restively. "I have been thinking it over, all the morning. My good times are about over. I shall have some in college; but after that I shall be all grown up and go to dinners and things, and be Mrs. Somebody, just like all the other Mrs. Somebodies. I want to do something that counts."

"I don't see any reason you shouldn't. Why don't you do it now?"

"Because—— Why, there aren't any chances for girls. We have to wait till we are grown up; then most of us have to keep on waiting."

Theodora pointed to the crowd of fluttering, chattering birds.

"There was one wee bit of a chance, dear, and you took it. You took another one, when you chose Percival for a friend, because he was lonely and forlorn."

"Oh, but that paid," Betty responded scornfully, for she had the true schoolgirl love of self-immolation.

"It generally does pay, though we don't expect it in the time of it. Betty, when do you think I was proudest of my girl, in all the past year?"

"The day I won the junior tournament," Betty replied promptly.

"No; the day we came up on the steamer, and you held the baby for the seasick woman. It wasn't a pretty baby, dear, and the mother wasn't a pretty woman."

"You are making me out rather a nice girl, after all, mamma." Betty laughed, as she spoke.

"I'm trying to show you that more chances come than you realize. It wasn't the baby, or the Percival; but the Betty back of it all that I was watching." Theodora hesitated for a minute; then she went on, "Betty, it is a dreadfully trite old saying that the goodness of every man is made or marred by a woman; but, after all, there is some truth in it, and every woman has plenty of chance to prove it. Sometimes the chances are so sudden and so great that they almost frighten us; but generally they are such very little ones that they come and go without our paying much attention to them. Those are the ones that show the stuff we are made of. It is a great deal easier to face real danger and trouble bravely than to stand the wear and tear of everyday living. I want my Betty to grow into a gen-

erous, happy, even-tempered woman, free from all moodiness and glad to make the best of whatever life gives her, whether it is much or little."

There was a silence which lasted so long that, with a flash of golden wings, three more orioles joined their mates beside the lawn-spray. Then Theodora spoke again.

"Betty, what do you suppose is my ideal of the girl I want you to be?"

"I don't know. What is it?"

"First of all, she is healthy and happy. I want her to enjoy life as it comes, to go to dinners and dances,—not too many,—to have a good time, herself, and to make sure that others do. I want her to be a girl who can't quite forget the wall-flowers, while she is dancing, every time; I want her to have as many girl friends as she does boys, and to treat them all just alike. She must be a girl who hates flirting and gossip and, above all, the least bit of fastness or fibbing, or selfishness in herself or in her friends. And then, as time goes on, I want her to grow to be a woman to whom men and women and even little children can come with their troubles and their worries, sure that she will listen and understand and say a help-

ful word to each one of them, so that they will go away, feeling better because they have seen her. That is something for women to do, not men, Betty; and it is a great deal more than to write books and own railroads and invent engines to pump up water. It is a chance we all of us have; but not many of us take it."

"I don't see why not."

"Because the taking it doesn't depend on any one great decision; but on the little things that come up, a dozen times a day. Now, dear, you are fifteen, to-day, and I am going to give you something to make you think of our talk together. I want you to wear it all the time, Betty, and, whenever you look at it, to think of two things: the mother who is so proud of her Betty and so fond of her, and the true, womanly woman that her Betty is surely going to be." As she spoke, she slipped on Betty's finger an old-fashioned hoop of gold that held one deep blue sapphire. "When I was just your age, Betty," she added; "Grandma Farrington gave me this ring, because papa and I were such true friends. I have always meant to give it to you, as soon as I felt you were old enough to wear it. The

best I can wish you with it is as happy a life as mine has been."

An hour later, they were still talking there, hand in hand in the sunshine. Mr. Farrington came out to the veranda, saw them and crossed the lawn to the spot where they were sitting. Resting one hand upon his wife's head, with the other he turned Betty's face upward and, stooping, he laid his cheek caressingly against her red-gold hair.

"Betty girl, I am glad you were born, dear," he said.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

HOPE, meanwhile, was doing housework by means of a Pole.

During her twenty years of life in the extreme West, Mrs. Archie Holden had clung to certain of the New England ideas she had gathered when, as Hope McAlister, she had learned the simple, efficient household ways of The Savins. Among these ideas was a deep-rooted dislike of Chinese house-servants, and she had suffered all manner of inconveniences and hiatuses in her kitchen, rather than submit to the dreaded Mongolian invasion.

Eager as she was to see her sister once more, Mrs. Holden had felt some uneasiness in regard to entertaining the three Farringtons for an indefinite period; but apparently Fate had smiled upon her. That rare bird in western towns, a raw recruit from Ireland, had applied for the place, and Hope had spent some weary weeks in training her to a sem-

blance of utility. Unhappily, although the recruit was raw, her temper was hot enough to cook her, several times over. Less than a week before the Farringtons were expected, a mild rebuke had brought on a fit of hysteria, in the course of which the recruit hurled the dripping dishcloth at her mistress and then withdrew to pack. From the front window, Mrs. Holden watched her departure. The station was not far away, and the train was just moving out, when a figure in a flowery hat and abbreviated skirts appeared at the top of the hill. A frayed bundle was under one arm; in the other hand, she waved an umbrella of unnatural dimensions, while she shouted,—

"Hould on, hould on, boss o' the puffer! I'm a-coomin'!"

And the boss o' the puffer did hold on, in sheer astonishment at the apparition.

Three days later, the Pole came.

It was a pretty Pole, and neat withal, notwithstanding certain maladjustments in the region of the belt. It had never before been transplanted into an American kitchen, and its English was limited to two words, *yes* and *wash*. Later on, it developed *chickie* which it

offered as an excuse for all its vagaries. It had a tendency to go barefooted, and its name was Bessie.

With a sigh of intense relief, Mrs. Holden set the Pole to work, paring potatoes, and went out to the front veranda to watch for her guests. Accustomed as she was to the mountains around her home, her glance lingered upon them lovingly, that morning, for the little camp had put on its most smiling face in welcome to the strangers and to its own returning children. Four years before, a sudden shifting of railway interests had ordained that Quitclaim was one day to be an important centre, and it had brought Archie Holden from Helena to take charge of construction in that district. Hope Holden was a domestic woman, content to make her home wherever her husband could be near her. She had never cared enthusiastically for Helena, and this wee, primitive town had appealed to her strongly. Had it not been for the lack of schools for her sons, she would have rejoiced at the change. But when a broken-down university professor had opportunely appeared upon the horizon and had been installed as tutor, Mrs. Holden felt that

her problem was solved, that henceforth she was free to enjoy to the uttermost the charms of Quitclaim.

A frivolous woman or a vain one would have been wretched there. Paris gowns were not, and the Holdens owned the only chafing dish in town. Nevertheless, there were a few truly cultivated people; there was Archie's well-stocked library, and there were always the clean, clear mountain air and the wonderful views down the cañon, for Quitclaim stood, a huddle of low houses, on a narrow shelf of the mountain which marked the parting of two famous cañons not far from the continental divide.

To-day, the air flashed like a diamond and, far down the eastern cañon, Hope could see the train slowly creeping up the winding, looping track. It came near and nearer, and once she had to shut her eyes and catch her breath sharply, as she realized that this train was bringing her two sons, absent for many weeks, and the favorite sister whom she had not seen for years.

"Rznac?"

She was roused by seeing at her elbow the Pole, potato pan in hand.

"What is it, Bessie? No; you needn't come here. I will come to you."

"Rznac?" Bessie reiterated, with the curious racial inflection which suggests the absence of palate.

"Yes, I suppose so," Mrs. Holden replied vaguely.

Swiftly the Pole stepped to the rail, and there was the flash of a pan. When, half an hour later, Mr. Holden escorted the guests to the front door, he found his wife laboriously picking scraps of potato parings from the patch of turf which did duty as a front lawn.

"Ted!"

"Hope! Oh, you dear old girl, if you knew how glad I am!"

"Mamma," Betty observed, the next morning; "I wish you would talk to me a little."

"Why, Betty, what's the matter?"

The girl laughed.

"I don't mean a lecture, mamma; I mean rational conversation. I feel alone in the world. Papa and Uncle Archie are talking yards of business, and you and Aunt Hope are about as bad. Harold is off with his friends, and I know Mac wants to be, only the dear

old fellow is too polite to leave me. I believe I wish Percival were here."

"Did you know Uncle Archie knows Percival's father?" Theodora asked, pulling her tall daughter down into her lap and rearranging the black velvet bow on her pigtail.

"Does he? How did you find out?"

"From something Percival said, I know it is the same man. He is DeWitt Ainslee, vice president of the Montana Western Railway. Isn't it an odd coincidence? But you aren't going to be homesick here; are you, Betty?"

Betty winked bravely for a minute.

"No," she said then; "I'm not going to be, because I won't. It is a dear little house, and I've always loved Aunt Hope. I—like Uncle Archie, only I'm a wee bit afraid of him. He's not nearly so nice as papa."

"Billy," Theodora looked up; as her husband entered the room; "Betty has made the startling discovery that she prefers you to Archie."

"Wise child! I am glad she has such good taste," he returned. "I feel that way, myself. Where is the girl now?"

"Mac has carried her off to explore the cañon. He plays the host like a little man.

He is a dear fellow, Billy; I don't see how Hope has spared him, all summer, for she depends on him for everything."

Betty and Mac, meanwhile, were strolling along a narrow trail up the mountain side. Quitclaim was near the timber line, and the path wound along among scrubby pines. Below them, far, far below, they could see the creek in the bottom of the cañon; above them, the mountain tops were already whitened with the early snow fall.

"It isn't much like Quantuck," Betty said regretfully.

"But don't you think you'll like it?" Mac's tone was full of the jealousy of the true Westerner whose town is being inspected by Eastern eyes.

"When I get used to it; but it is all so strange to me, the little bits of houses, and the funny sham front of the store and all."

"No more so than Quantuck," Mac returned indignantly. "The Lodge was one of the largest cottages in the old town, and our house is as large as that."

"Don't get cranky, Mac," she answered, laughing. "I'm going to like Quitclaim, only it isn't just like anything else I know, and it

astonishes me at first. Besides, I could be happy in Sahara, with you and Aunt Hope and Uncle Archie."

"You won't have him long."

"Why not?"

"He has to go back to camp, Monday."

"Where is that?"

"Over in Idaho. He wants your father to go with him."

"Oh, but papa can't. Something would happen to him."

"What?"

"Why, snakes and things. Don't you have beasts in these woods?"

"Not every day. Look, Betty! We can see the Bluebird bridge from here."

Betty looked back.

"I can see something I like a great deal better," she exclaimed, and, turning, she dashed down the path to meet her father who came striding after them.

Catching Betty by both arms, he held her away from him and eyed her with merry rebuke.

"My rampaging daughter, do you realize your great age?"

"Yes, I am proud of it," she returned auda-

ciously. "Aren't there any goodies in your pocket?"

"What should make you think of such a thing? You should be content to feast on nature in such a place as this."

"But I prefer art, sweet art, and your left coat-tail sticks out. I know there's something good. Come, Mac, I'll give you a taste."

Mr. Farrington gravely unloaded his pocket.

"Item: one box of Huyler, accidentally discovered in the trunk. Item: one box of salted almonds. No, Betty; candy isn't good for little girls. Give it right to McAlister."

"Let's have a picnic," she suggested. "I'm going to sit down on this flat stone, and somebody can have a corner of my skirt."

"Thanks; but I prefer this." Mr. Farrington stretched himself on the dry turf. "By Jove, what a view!" he added, half to himself. "Mac, I don't wonder your father is what he is, living in this country."

"What is he?" Mac asked unexpectedly.

"A strong, clean-minded man. If a fellow has anything in him to build on, it must make a man of him to live face to face with these mountains and spend his time conquering their wildness. It is a grand profession."

"Why didn't you do it, too, papa?" Betty asked idly.

"I couldn't, dear. You know, for six or eight years, I wasn't more than half alive, and I had to take something not quite so vigorous." His voice was regretful. Side by side with his rugged brother-in-law, Billy Farrington felt a passing dissatisfaction with the fate that had settled his choice of profession.

"I'm glad you did. We never could have borne it to have you coming and going, the way Uncle Archie is. Mac says he must start for camp, Monday. Where is he now?"

"Voting."

"For what?" Betty's accent was disrespectful.

"For some county officer; I'm not sure what one."

"I shouldn't suppose Uncle Archie would care to fuss about that kind of thing," she observed disdainfully.

Her father shook his head.

"I never expected to hear your grandfather's granddaughter say that, Betty girl."

"Why not? Grandpa isn't a politician," Mac said, as he crunched an almond.

"Only as we all ought to be."

"I don't see any ought about it."

"I think there's a decided ought. If we are really to be governed by vote of the people, then it's the duty, not the privilege, of every man to help on that vote. There is bound to be a certain amount of bribery, so all the more reason that each man of the rest of us should decide just where he stands on every point, and vote with the party which comes nearest to his ideals. We have no business to shirk the question. If we are trying for a decent government, it is time every honest, intelligent man made up his mind to come forward and work for it. Mac, if I had a dozen sons, I would bring up every one of them to feel it his plain duty to understand politics and to vote intelligently and independently on every issue that came up. There are too few men in the country who give as much thought to their vote as they do to their dinner, on election day."

"Is this aimed at me, Uncle Billy?" Mac asked soberly.

"No, thank heaven! Your father feels as I do, and he will train you to do your duty, Mac. But I am in earnest about this. Politics has turned into a science for the bosses; it oughtn't to be a joke for the rest of us, un-

less we are willing to get the worst of it. The sooner we forget fads and petty issues, and stand shoulder to shoulder, ready to work out our salvation in the world, the better for us. What's more, our work must be carried even into the smallest village election, or we shall have no right to call ourselves loyal citizens."

It was only now and then that Mr. Farrington cast aside his careless, boyish manner. Now he spoke earnestly, with the straightforward manliness which had won him the respect as well as the love of his daughter. Betty always gloried in his outbursts; yet it was with a laugh that she broke the silence which followed his words.

"Poor old papa! What a shame you have nothing but a non-voting daughter to bring up! If you'll let me, I'll vote for you for the next president. I always did think it would be pleasant to eat in the White House for a living." Then she bent over and buried her cheek in the curve of her father's elbow. "I don't know anything about it," she added explosively; "and I'm glad I'm a girl and don't have to; but, if I were Mac, I should be glad of this lecture, and I'm just as proud of you as I can be, even if you are my father."

More than an hour later, they rose to their feet and started down the mountain once more. To Mac, earnest boy though he was, the coming of his legal manhood had taken on a new significance. In that one hour on the mountain side, he had gained his first broad outlook on the duty the country asks each man to fulfill, a new appreciation of the true dignity and breadth of politics, a new respect and reverence for his uncle. Rather to his surprise, the quiet, cultured, easy-going man of the world had proved himself a student and a conscientious thinker, and Mac suddenly realized why it was that his wonderful Aunt Theodora paid such deference to her husband's judgment in all things.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

"MIGHT I inquire what you are doing, Mac?" Betty's tone was that of superiority, for a slight cloud had arisen between herself and her favorite cousin.

"I should think you could see for yourself," Mac grumbled, as he sopped his cloth in a pail of water beside him and made a fresh onslaught on the floor.

"Well, of all the messes!"

"I wish you would go away, Betty. Breakfast will be ready by and by."

"So glad! I'm awfully hungry. Where is Bessie?"

"I told her to set the table."

"She doesn't know what that means. You will have to show her."

Mac muttered something that sounded like,—

"Show, be hanged!"

Betty laughed unfeelingly.

"That is just what I had to do. What is all over the floor? Molasses?"

"Looks like it." Mac was undeniably cross.

"What did you do? Tip over the jug?"

"Oh, hang it! Do get out!"

"But what did you do?"

"I didn't do anything. The jug was filled up, yesterday, and that blasted fool jammed the cover down and left it standing by the stove, over night. Of course it had to blow itself up." Mac swabbed away violently.

"Seems to me I wouldn't go to bed without seeing whether things were put away. If it is just as convenient, Mac, don't wash the molasses any higher up on the wall. It is rather sticky, you know." And, with this parting shot, Betty picked her way daintily out of the room.

They had been in Quitclaim for a month now, and, a week before, Hope had received a letter from her husband. Womanlike, she looked at the enclosure first, and knitted her brows over the slip of brown paper with its strange legend:

"Curants. Salratiss. Krackers. ½ Dusant Smal Panns. 1 Skimer. Vanalla. Tapoka. Thym. Choping Bool Protatos."

Then she turned to the letter itself.

"Dear girl:—Enclosed you will find the latest list made up by the cook. At least, it is phonetic.

"We have a stunning camp. It is on an island in Snake River, No Man's Land, for it is between two states and belongs to neither. Can't you come out, Thursday, and bring Ted for ten days, while this warm weather lasts? We have an extra tent, and she ought to pick up some new ideas for a book. Sorry I can't make room for Betty. I'll look for you on the noon train at Cyanide."

"If it only weren't for the Pole!" she sighed, as she passed the note to her sister.

Theodora read it.

"Hope, I am going. Moreover, I can't go without you to chaperon me. Let Betty wield the Pole; it will be a good experience for her. She knows how to cook a few things, so the boys won't absolutely starve, and Billy can see that they don't get into serious straits. Can't you go, dear? It will be such a chance for me."

Hope yielded, though with certain reservations and misgivings, and, four days later, Betty assumed command. The first day, all went well. By this time, the Pole had learned a round dozen of words; also she could fry potatoes. For the rest, Betty fed them from the supplies left by Hope, eked out by some curious speckled muffins of her own manufacture.

"Oh, I say, Betty," Mac had remonstrated, the next noon; "toast and fried potatoes are a little slim. Do give us something a little more filling for dinner."

All that long afternoon, Betty remained shut up in the kitchen. Occasionally there was a thump, or an over-energetic word to the Pole; but dinner time came and went, and there was no summons to the table. At last, however, the door opened, and they filed out, three hungry men, to find a repast of smoky beefsteak, cool, soggy potatoes and a pudding of no species classified in any cook book. Flushed, crocky and dishevelled, Betty stood by the table, with one doubtful eye upon the results of her toil, the other upon her starving kindred. She longed to throw her arms around her father, when she saw the studied unconsciousness with which he took his seat; she flushed at Harold's giggle; but when Mac, grave-eyed and earnest, undertook to reason with her, she lost her temper completely. She had counted upon Mac as her faithful friend and ally, even in the present famine, and it hurt her feelings the more to have him forsake her.

"I think I know as much as you about

housekeeping, McAlister Holden!" she burst out. "I don't care for your good advice. If you don't like the way I manage things, you can see to your old Pole, yourself."

And Mac, with a dignity which he afterwards judged to have been rash, replied,—

"Very well, I will."

The evening passed off with some constraint. Betty was tired, Mac was hungry, and both of them were cross. Mr. Farrington pretended to read, although in reality he was meditating how to restore peace, while Harold prudently took himself off in search of one of his boy chums. At precisely her usual hour, Betty said good-night, with punctilious courtesy to Mac, with unusual demonstrativeness to her father; then she stalked out of the room and went away to cry herself to sleep. Mac was such a dear fellow, and this was her first quarrel with him; but even he must be more respectful. She never—would—have supposed —that—Mac ——

Morning brought an over-active conscience, also a certain naughty sense of fun which led her to the kitchen to see how Mac was progressing. If he had been penitent, Betty would have been pacific. Instead of that, Mac, on

his knees washing up the molasses from the floor, was huffy, and accordingly Betty resolved to leave him to his own devices, and returned to the parlor.

Half an hour passed, then an hour, and still there was no sign of breakfast.

"Harold," Betty demanded pettishly; "do go to see whether Mac intends to give us anything to eat, to-day."

Nothing loath to get the laugh on his older brother, Harold departed. As he was passing through the dining-room, sounds of strife met his ears, Mac's voice raised in chiding, and a stream of Polish explanation which strongly reminded him of the Jabberwock. He reconnoitred; then he judged that it would not be well to show himself just then, so he silently glided into the china closet and applied his eyes and his ears to the open slide.

Behind him in the dining-room, the table was set with a strange medley of dinner knives and oyster forks, of china and of kitchen tin. Napkins were not, nor cups; but beside Betty's place the coffee stood cooling, the triumphant result of five weeks of careful training. The Pole had made the coffee, leaving Mac to do the rest. Through the open slide, Harold,

himself unseen, could watch Mac and the Pole, could see the domestic crisis unfold itself, and the sight made him forget the pangs of hunger which had begun to gnaw him.

With his coat off, his sleeves rolled to the elbow and his flaxen hair on end, Mac stood by the stove, gridiron in hand. On top of the stove was Hope's best platter, covered with an assortment of chops which, in so far as the mere numbers went, would have sufficed to feed a small army, for Mac had sternly resolved to show his cousin what it meant to be a liberal provider. Some of the chops were charred, others were in their native pinkiness of surface, and a fatty trail led from the platter to the blazing gridiron, with side tracks to the shelf across the room. Beside Mac and under his watchful eye, the Pole was pounding away at a kettleful of boiled potatoes. Suddenly she paused and looked up at Mac.

"Pieprzmczka?" she inquired.

"What?"

"Pieprzmczka?"

"No; mash! Pound!"

"Yaes. Yaes. Pieprzmczka?"

"What in thunder are you talking about?" Mac asked irately, as he drew his sleeve across

his dripping brow. "Finish up those potatoes and be quick about it."

The Pole hesitated, so Mac seized her by the elbow and set her arm in motion once more. Then too late he discovered that the momentary digression had proved too much for his chops.

"Oh, blast it!" he observed, as he deposited the charry remains upon the platter. "What do you suppose I ought to put on these things? Salt, maybe, and a little butter."

The Pole kept her suppositions to herself, so Mac rummaged the pantry for salt, gave the platter a lavish sprinkling of clove, under the mistaken impression that every box with a perforated cover must contain pepper, and then lifted up his voice.

"Butter," he demanded. "Bessie, butter. Quick! Get me a chunk of butter and hurry up about it!"

"By by?"

"No; now. Butter!"

"Box?" she said inquiringly.

"No; butter. Nice butter. Butter for meat."

"Befsztyk? Butter? Box? Yaes."

"Well, get it, then. Where is the box?"

She vanished. Later, Mac heard the bang

of the refrigerator door. Still later, the Pole reappeared, with a morsel of butter poised on the point of the carving knife.

"Yes; but more. Get more, quick!"

She looked at him uncomprehendingly.

"Hurry! Butter, more butter! Bring! Oh, you immortal lunatic, bring me that butter! They are starving, I tell you, and breakfast isn't ready."

There was a moment of indecision. Then the Pole drew a dipperful of water and offered it to him.

"Wash?" she asked blandly.

"No; get butter! Here, give me the knife, and I'll get it. You cut the bread. Bread! You, Bessie, bread! Understand?"

"Yaes."

"Can you cut it?"

"Yaes."

"Do it, then, and, for mercy's sake, hurry up!"

He departed in search of the butter. The search was a long one, and, when he returned, the Pole was tranquilly pounding away at the potatoes once more and no bread was in sight.

"Where is the bread?" he asked. "Did you put it on the table?"

"Tabul? Yaes? No."

"Where is it?"

She shrugged her left shoulder until it grazed her ear, and opened her hands, palms outward.

"Where—is—the—bread?"

The Pole felt that some explanation was required of her.

"Chickie," she said; but even this failed to satisfy Mac's natural interest in the subject.

"What the mischief have you done with it, you—you polyglot heathen?" he exploded, taking refuge in the certainty that she was unable to understand his epithets. "Have you eaten it up?" He pointed to his mouth and wagged his jaws, to shed light upon his meaning.

The Pole snatched at his elbow as if she feared lest, juggler fashion, he was about to swallow the knife in his hand.

"No, mister! Bessie no! See!" She dragged him to the door and pointed to the wire enclosure where Hope kept a few elderly hens. "See, mister! Chickie-box," she added conclusively.

"You—you Thing! Have you fed all that bread to the hens?"

"Yaes, chickie." And she resumed her assault upon the potatoes.

Mac ground his teeth despairingly. Then abruptly he bethought himself of the butter and hurried back to the stove to put it on the fast-cooling chops where it lay, an orange oasis in a black and crocky desert.

"Now I think it is all ready. Take it to the table, Bessie," he said more calmly.

"Nice. Yaes. Tabul?" she replied, as she shouldered the platter and cuddled the plates in the calico folds of her elbow.

"Where is the coffee?" Mac inquired suddenly.

"Mister! Tabul."

"What? When?" Mac dashed into the dining-room, barely missing Harold who fled, chuckling, at his approach. "It will be stone cold, and Uncle Billy must have good coffee, whatever happens. Confound it! It's frozen over."

But by this time, the Pole had rung the bell and vanished, leaving Mac to face his hungry relatives as best he might.

With inward glee but outward disdain, Betty picked and minced at her breakfast, though her heart smote her at the sight of

Mac's tired face. In her secret soul, she longed to send him off and clear away the meal, herself; but she felt that Mac had been the aggressor in the first place, and now it was for him to make the first advance. Accordingly, she rose with a brief,—

"Lunch will be ready at the usual time, I suppose," and followed Harold out of the room, without waiting for the rebuke which she saw trembling on her father's lips.

Mac put both elbows on the table and looked after her retreating figure.

"No; don't scold her, Uncle Billy," he begged. "She doesn't mean to be beastly, and really she isn't so much to blame. She must have had an awful time, yesterday, and I had no business to grumble as I did. It serves me right, and Betty will come round in time."

Her father laughed, though he looked a little anxious.

"Betty has a temper of her own, Mac; but it isn't like her to hold out in this way. She will come round by and by, and see her own unreasonableness; but it isn't of the least use to scold her until she begins to repent. Now see here, old fellow, Harold and Betty have gone up the cañon; I heard them planning it, last

night. Let's leave the Pole to get rid of this stuff, and come over to the hotel for something to eat. I don't mean any disrespect to your cookery; but, if you have to cope with the lunch problem, you mustn't try to do it on an empty stomach."

Betty fretted and scolded, all the way up the cañon, that morning. She grumbled at the walking; she ignored the view, and she utterly refused to give a smile to Harold's account of the scenes he had witnessed in the kitchen. Lunch time was still remote when, watch in hand, she ordered a return homeward.

As they drew near the house, Mac was invisible, but not inaudible. They could hear him shouting commands to the Pole, under the too common notion that volume of tone would act as a medium of interpretation where mere language failed. Betty sternly declined Harold's invitation to share the prospect from the slide. Instead, she strayed aimlessly to the parlor, and, sitting down at the piano, played *Greenville* in a doleful *andante* which, like a boomerang, reacted upon her own nerves with its pathos and moved her to the verge of tears. She hated Montana. She hated Harold who was a bore. She hated Mac who was a cruel,

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unkind cousin, and didn't care one single bit about her and wouldn't say he was sorry.

Then she started up abruptly. Through the closed door, through the dreary strains of *Greenville*, she heard a thud and a clatter, and then a cry of pain from Mac. In an instant, her hatred had vanished, and she rushed to the kitchen, to find Mac on the floor, tearing the shoe and stocking from his right foot. With characteristic deftness, the Pole had contrived to upset the teakettle of boiling water, just as Mac was passing the stove.

Compared with what it might have been, the burn was a slight one; but, even as it was, Betty turned sick, as she saw the red, puffy foot and ankle, and heard Mac's one little moan when the last tug brought away a bit of skin with the stocking. But Mac, as he lay on the sofa with Betty fussing over him, putting cool things on the burn and coddling him after the fashion of girls, was willing to bear the pain for the sake of what came with it. After the first stir had settled down a little and the others had gone out to see what the Pole was doing to the dinner, Betty dropped down on the floor beside Mac and rested her cheek against his hand.

"Mac, I was such a wretch," she said penitently. "It's no use to say I am sorry; but—you know we never fought before."

Mac patted her cheek with a fatherly caress; then, as he felt the tears there, he stooped and gave her a sounding kiss.

"Don't mind, Betty," he answered. "There were a pair of us, and we won't do it any more, dear."

"No," Betty said, with a meekness which surprised him and yet seemed to him inexpressibly winning; "but don't you think that after this, Mac, perhaps we'd better collaborate? I can't manage the Pole alone; but maybe we can help each other."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

OCTOBER came and went, and then November, and still the Farringtons lingered in Quitclaim. There was no especial reason for their return; Mrs. Holden was eager to have them with her, and Theodora was making a leisurely study of a possible background for a new story. To Betty, the days seemed to be flying on wings. After her first week of uneasiness, she had settled down into her new surroundings with a whole-souled enjoyment of their constant novelty. Day after day, there was something fresh to be seen, to be done. Harold had introduced her to his boy friends who had received her enthusiastically. Girls like Betty Farrington were rare in Quitclaim, and she would have been in a fair way to become spoiled by too much attention, had it not been for the wholesome influence of her mother.

In the precocious life of the extreme West, girls of fifteen were expected to be out in

society; but Theodora would have none of a custom which seemed to her so harmful. She laid down her rules accordingly. Betty might have all the daytime frolics she wished; but evening receptions were forbidden. Betty submitted to the inevitable with the better grace, because Mac immediately grumbled that such things were bores and spent his evenings at home where the two cousins held grand revels. Their first quarrel had been their last. Mac's forgiveness had been as generous as Betty's penitence, and over the scalded ankle they had sworn a treaty of peace which the coming years were powerless to break. Betty adored Mac for his honest, quiet strength of character; and, on her side, she gave him what his sisterless life had always lacked till then.

The liking between Betty and Harold was of another sort. They were boon companions in mischief, in out-door sports and in their morning lessons. Betty enjoyed Harold just as she enjoyed his boy companions; but Mac had long since discovered that he had no cause for jealousy of his younger brother. It was never to Harold that Betty confided her girlish dreams and aspirations; she never gave

Harold the solemn little lectures she was so fond of bestowing upon Mac, and upon the rare occasions when she was moved to tears, she would have gone to any lengths to hide her face from Harold's eyes, although Mac was her refuge in her moments of woe. In Quitclaim as in Quantuck, the tall blond boy and the bright-faced girl were rarely far apart.

One windy, raw day, however, she and Harold were out alone together. Mac had appeared at the breakfast-table, hoarse as a raven, and Mr. Farrington had advised him to stay in the house until he could talk like a man, not a fog horn. Accordingly, he had given up his plans for the afternoon, and Harold and his cousin had sallied forth without him.

The chilly wind came sweeping up the cañon and through the main street of the little town where Betty had an errand in what she was pleased to term the business centre. To be sure, the centre in question stood quite at the far end of the street, beyond the sham-fronted pool rooms and the railway station; but it was in all truth the centre of trade, since the one small building of which it consisted, held everything from darn-

ing cotton to codfish. They reached the door, panting. It had been no light exercise to fight their way against the wind, and, Betty's purchase made, they were glad to turn their backs and trot homeward before the gale which sent the ruddy locks flying across Betty's face and cast Harold's cap into the dust.

Betty pointed to it in derision.

"Is there anything in the world more ignominious than a man running after his hat?" she asked.

For his only reply, Harold stuck his hands into his pockets and whistled to the cap which disobediently headed its course towards a side street.

"Oh, get it, Harold! You'll lose it," she protested, as the cap vanished around the corner. "Hurry, or it will be over in Dakota, before you know it."

"I'm not going to make myself ignominious," he retorted. "If I wait, it will repent of its bad ways and come back to me. There! Didn't I tell you so? Here comes a fellow with it in his hand, and, by the immortal Moses, it is Percival Ainslee!"

"Percival!" Betty echoed in astonishment.

Then she suddenly solved the problem of what could be more ignominious than a man running after his hat. The wind caught the folds of her soft, full cape, turned it wrong side out in the air, wrapped it about her head, twisted it into a knot and then let it fall back, a close, heavy bundle which deprived her of sight and hearing.

She knew that Percival was coming towards them, and she plucked wildly at the cape; but she only succeeded in drawing it more tightly across her face. She heard a jolly, boyish laugh, felt two strong hands busy about her head, and then she stood blinking in the sunlight and smiling up into the honest, kindly eyes of her friend.

"Where—did —— ?" she gasped.

"Get your breath, first," he advised her, laughing. "Here, Harold and I will hold down this confounded blanket where it belongs. Glad to see me?"

"I should rather say I was. How did you get here?"

"My father had to come out on business, and I made him bring me. I told him I was afraid I might be ill, this winter, unless I had a vacation now."

"Why didn't you let us know you were coming?"

"Spoil all the fun. I wanted to surprise you."

"Well, you certainly succeeded. When did you come?"

"An hour ago."

"How long can you stay?"

"Two or three weeks."

"Oh, stop your everlasting questions, Betty. He is here, so who cares for the rest of the story? Come home with us, Percival, and see what Mac says to you. Where is your father?"

"In your father's office."

"So he is the man my father is expecting; is he? Well, come along home and see the rest of the family."

"Mamma," Betty said, when she and her mother were alone, the next night; "did you know Aunt Hope is going to have a dance for us, next week?"

Mrs. Farrington looked up from her book.

"I heard a vague rumor of something of the kind," she replied, with a smile. "How do you like the idea?"

"Like it? I love it. Every other girl in

Quitclaim has been to lots of dances since we came, and you haven't let me go to a single one."

"No, dear."

"Why not?"

"Because you aren't old enough."

"But I'm sure I look so. Mrs. Van Hicks said, 'way back last summer, that she would take me to be eighteen. I think I am old enough to begin to go to things. Mamma?" There was a catch in Betty's breath.

"Well?"

"May I go to Mrs. Leonard's, to-morrow night? Mayn't I, please? Percival is going, and Harold and Mac. It isn't like some places. Josie is my friend, after a fashion, and Mrs. Leonard asked you to bring me. I heard her."

Theodora smiled a little at the eager face and voice; but she shook her head.

"Oh, why not? Please say *yes*."

Stretching out her hand, Mrs. Farrington drew her daughter to her side.

"Betty, dear, when you were a tiny girl and teased for things, I used to tell you to look straight into my eyes and make sure I meant *no*. Perhaps you'd better do it now."

"But I don't see any real reason," she argued.

"Naughty little girl that teases, sit down on my knee and be scolded. There! Now, Betty," the laughing note died out of her voice; "I am truly in earnest, dear. You are nothing but a little girl, and that grown-up party is no place for you."

"It isn't all grown-up."

"Not all; but there will be grown-up people there, people we neither of us know. I don't want young men I never saw before, asking my Betty to dance with them. Besides, dear, we both, your father and I, want to keep you a little girl as long as we can. You can't ever go backwards, Betty. When the mischief is done, it is done for all time, and nothing is much worse to me than a girl of eighteen or nineteen who is an old story in society, perfectly at home with strange young men, and fagged out with late hours. There aren't many girls left now, more's the pity! Most of them are either old babies or young society women."

"But the other girls do," Betty said, with something dangerously like a pout.

"Do what? Be old babies?"

"No; go to things, and have fun."

"Poor little Betty! Doesn't she have any fun?" Theodora asked teasingly.

"You know what I mean, mamma," she said hotly. "Besides, it is rather hard to have Percival and our boys going to things that I can't. They will think that I am a perfect stick, and by and by they won't have anything to do with me."

"Perhaps not; but in that case they won't be the boys I take them for."

"Boys don't like priggy girls," Betty said decidedly.

"Then don't be a prig," her mother answered quickly. "Not that it is priggy to stay at home from parties, though. Now, Betty, I shall like you to have the dance Aunt Hope is talking about. It is for the friends of the boys, all boys and girls together. This other thing is different. If Mrs. Leonard is willing to have Josie dancing around till midnight, with a low-necked gown and her hair done up on top of her head, I can't help it; but I am going to keep my own daughter out of it, just as long as I can."

"But if I wear my hair down my back,

next week, the boys won't dance with me," Betty protested, for her mother had suddenly undermined her last and dearest hope.

"I'll risk the pigtail." Theodora laughed, as she recalled Percival's persistent following at Betty's heels, during the past four and twenty hours. The boy evidently was quite content to find himself with his last summer's comrade, and Theodora, as she watched his simple, boyish chivalry, had been satisfied to have even her Betty in his company. "Now, Betty girl, listen to me," she went on, after a pause. "I want you to have all the good times you can; I want you to go to little dances now and then, if your friends give them; but I want you to be willing to let society alone for a few years. If you'll be patient and stay a little girl for a while longer, then I promise that you shall have your turn, and I will do all I can to make it a happy one. I don't ever want you to forget that very late hours and careless partners are to be forbidden, that my Betty must never show the least hint of fastness. For the rest, I want you, when the proper time comes, to have the best time possible for any girl, to go through it all a modest, quiet, unspoiled Betty and come out of

the whirl as true and simple as you went in. Is it a bargain, dear?"

"Aunt Ted?" Mac's voice came through the keyhole, just as Mrs. Farrington was adding the finishing touches to Betty, on the night of the dance. "Percival has come, and he wanted me to give you this box."

"Come in, Mac, and look us over," his aunt responded, with one last hasty pat on Betty's sash. "Are you satisfied with us?"

Mac stepped into the room and bowed low, as he handed a long, narrow box to his aunt.

"Sublime, madame!" he responded, laying his hand on his heart. Then he turned to Betty and surveyed her from head to heel. "Say, Betty, that's all right!" he said approvingly. "You look just the way I hoped you would, fresh as a daisy and neat as a new pin."

"Josie Leonard is going to wear pink silk," she confided to him in a mournful aside, while her mother opened the box and lifted up the heavy-headed roses within.

"Let her! Bet you it will be draggle-tailed; she always is," Mac commented disrespectfully. "I like this lots better, and so will Percival, see if he doesn't."

As soon as Betty appeared in the parlor,

Percival bore down upon her, his face beaming with satisfaction. Boy-like, he had no idea that the simple white muslin frock, made in Paris, was far more costly than the elaborate silk gowns of the other girls. He did know, however, that, coming close up under the string of gold beads at her throat and ending at her ankles, its soft fleecy whiteness was broken only by the shimmering sash and by the heavy braid of bright hair. One white rose nestled in the bow which held the front locks away from her face, and from the topmost petal of the rose to the tip of her shoe, she was dainty and girlish. She met him girlishly, for she had no idea that, in her white muslin gown, she defied all criticism.

"Say, you're stunning," he observed contentedly. "I hate fuss and fol-de-rols and things that pull to pieces; but you don't look rigged up a bit. It's my first innings on the dances, remember, so save me all you can." And he departed to pay his respects to Mrs. Farrington and to listen to her thanks for the roses which she wore.

"Was it a good time, Betty?"

She looked up from the sash she was folding.

"Beautiful, mamma; I never had a better one. Everybody was so nice to me, and I danced, every time. Besides," she gave a little satisfied kick backwards; "I didn't have to keep fussing about my clothes. Josie's gown was pretty; but it was a perfect doormat, and I heard Mac declaring he'd cut it off, if he only had some shears. Her hair tumbled down, too, and she had to go off into Aunt Hope's room and do it up all over again. It must be an awful nuisance to wear grown-up clothes; I believe I am glad you wouldn't let me. Only," she unclasped her beads regretfully; "only Josie does have such a sweet neck that I don't wonder she likes to show it," she added, with one last sigh for her own baffled vanity.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE first week in December had come, and Quitclaim lay half-buried in snowdrifts. The roadways through the town were deep-packed and hard as iron. In the shelter of the houses, the ground was nearly bare; but the drifts between gave the camp the odd look of having its buildings set in a series of holes scooped out for the purpose. The two cañons stretched away, two broad, white aisles between the pine-dotted walls of the mountains, and Bald Butte in the distance sparkled like a gigantic quartz crystal.

To Betty, standing at the window and looking out across the town, it seemed that she had never seen so blue a sky, so white a landscape. Against the intense blue and white background, the pine trees showed in greyish green patches, and the thin banner of smoke from a copper smelter beyond the town marked the picture like the track of an inky finger. Everything else glistened and glittered and snapped in the vivid sunshine.

Out in the kitchen, the Pole was thumping and whacking with a vigor unusual even for her, and Betty reluctantly turned away from the sunshiny window and went to see what the clamor portended. She and Mac, in the absence of their mothers, were once more doing coöperative housekeeping.

By this time, it was an open secret in the McAlister family that Theodora's next book would be a study of engineering life in the extreme West, and Mr. Holden, who loved his profession loyally, had set himself to work to teach her its real greatness. He told her of its risks, its hardships, its dangers of failure, its possible triumphs. He explained to her the make-up and discipline of his parties in the field; he gave her practical lessons in the uses of the instruments, and put her through a collection of estimates and maps, while Mr. Farrington railed at them both, and Hope protested that her sister was by profession a full-fledged novelist, not the apprentice of a civil engineer.

"Don't mind them, Archie," Theodora said, laughing up into the brown face beside her. "If I am to write shop, I must learn the shoppiest kind of shop to base it on, and this

is my one chance. I don't care if I do bore you. You owe me the instruction, to pay for the slumming lesson I gave you, once upon a time."

"The night you stole the little Guinea and stuck her into bed, and I sat on her? Why don't you write that up, Ted? It would make a great story."

"Or the time you went out to distribute temperance tracts?" Hope added.

But Theodora shook her head.

"You will never coax me into writing of my own iniquities, as long as my relatives furnish me enough to fill so many volumes. It must be very hard on a writer to belong to a goody family. Now do please keep still and let Archie tell me about cross-sectioning."

And now Mr. Holden was just coming to the finish of his season's work. The long, curving trestle and bridge to the building of which he had given so much time and thought were drawing near completion. After a good deal of persuasion, he had induced the two sisters to spend a few days with him in camp, in order that Theodora, before she went home, might not only have a taste of camp life in winter, but also watch the growth of the bridge

which he felt sure would add so much to his reputation.

Three days before, then, they had departed, laden with furs. Theodora was wildly enthusiastic over the plan; Hope was resigned, but cheerful. For the sake of her sister and her husband, she was willing to endure the doubtful pleasures of winter camp life, and her resignation was rewarded by a most comfortable and hilarious time.

The Pole was bumpily ironing a shirt waist of Mrs. Holden's, which she loudly proclaimed as her own, offering the lucid explanation,—

"Bessie! Yaes! Chickie-box; no, cellar!"

Betty tarried for a season to remonstrate with her; but the Pole took refuge in a torrent of her own vernacular, and Betty fled to the parlor once more, resolving to leave the matter in abeyance until her aunt came home to speak for herself.

"Harold, what is the matter with you?" she inquired. "Aren't you well?"

"Yes; but I'm lazy." He stretched himself and then cuddled down again in the great easy chair.

"But it isn't like you to be so—so——"

"So lazy?" he asked, with a short laugh.

"Then you don't know me, Betty. Honestly, I'm all right."

In her secret heart, Betty disagreed with him. It was no unusual thing for Harold to be late to breakfast; it was most unusual, however, for him to be listless and irritable, when he did appear. It was quite as unusual to have him refuse to go out, when Percival called for him, and spend his morning huddled over the fire without so much as a newspaper with which to amuse himself. Betty vaguely wished that her mother were there, or her aunt; but she saw no use in saying anything to her father and Mac. If there really were something wrong with Harold, they would find it out soon enough.

By evening, Mr. Farrington had found it out, and he looked a little anxious, as he ordered the boy to bed and spoke of a doctor in the morning. As night came on, Harold grew hoarse and feverish; worst of all, he seemed to have singularly little strength. He made light of the matter, however, joked over their alarm and protested that he had not the least notion of being ill.

Mac and Betty had a monopoly of the sleep done in the house, that night. As a rule, Mr.

Farrington was not easily alarmed; but now he was too anxious to sleep. He feared Harold was threatened with serious illness; it would take at least four days to get Mrs. Holden home, and he knew Quitclaim too well to cherish any fond idea of finding a nurse within its limits. Besides, it might be something infectious. At the thought, he sat up in bed and drew a long, quick breath, while he resolved to send Mac and Betty over to the hotel, before breakfast was ready, the next morning. And while Mr. Farrington was tossing to and fro, full of vague alarms and vaguer plans, the Pole was creeping through the kitchen to the outer door, laden with two vast bundles culled from the wardrobes of Mrs. Holden and her sister.

The grey light of a snowy morning came drearily in upon a demoralized household. Alarmed by Harold's heavy breathing and by his pallor, Mac had roused his uncle at dawn; and Betty, wakened by the stir, had thrown on a wrapper and joined them. There was a short consultation. Then, while her father returned to Harold, and Mac departed for the doctor, Betty went to call the Pole. At least, she could see that her

father and Mac had a hot breakfast as soon as possible.

The Pole's room was empty, deserted; and, with a curious sinking of the heart, Betty went to the kitchen. She found the door open, the fire out and the pantry bare. It would have been a relief if she had been five years old, not fifteen. Then she could have raised her voice in lamentation, and let somebody else attack the practical side of the situation. As it was, she went down cellar and, careless of the splinters that scratched her cold, stiff little hands, fell to splitting kindlings with an energy which atoned for her lack of skill.

"Betty, what are you doing?"

Mac's voice, grave but kind, roused her, and the tears came, as she dropped the heavy hatchet.

"I'm—making—a—fire."

"Where's Bessie?"

"Gone."

"Gone! Where?"

"I don't know. In the night, sometime, and taken all her things. I am trying to get you some breakfast."

She looked so little and so dainty, as she

stood there with her bright hair hanging over her blue wrapper, and her bare feet stuck into her fur-edged slippers. Her voice was the voice of a tired child; but it was a woman who smiled bravely up at Mac, as she stooped to pick up the scattered kindlings.

"Betty, dear, you let those alone," he said, as he saw the long red scars on her hands. "If we are in partnership, you may cook, but it is my work to make the fires."

"Is the doctor here?"

"He is on the way."

"Do you think Harold——"

"He's pretty bad, I'm afraid."

"Oh, Mac!"

"Yes, Betty; but maybe it isn't so bad."

The brotherly protection in his tone and in his strong arms was very comforting to Betty. For a few minutes, she clung to him and let the tears come fast. Then she pulled herself together.

"Come, Mac," she said, with a forlorn little smile; "it won't do us any good to wail. We'd much better be starting up all the fires and having some hot coffee. You must be chilled through and through."

"Betty, how soon can you be ready to go

over to the hotel?" her father asked abruptly, as he swallowed his coffee, half an hour later.

"I'm not going to the hotel," she replied quietly.

"Yes, you and Mac are to go. Dr. Lynch says that Harold has a bad case of diphtheria; but that you aren't likely to have run any risk of infection yet. He is going to send up a Chinaman to take Bessie's place, and I want you to go."

"Who will take care of Harold? There's not a nurse in town."

"I will."

"And who will take care of you?"

"I can take care of myself, dear. You don't need to worry."

Betty started to speak. Instead, she shut her lips, rose from the table and took one or two turns up and down the room. Then she faced her father again. Her face was white; but her voice was steady.

"Papa," she said; "I want you to listen to me for just one minute. Don't interrupt, please; but wait till I am all through. Mac will go to the hotel. Yes, Mac, you must. You know your throat isn't your strong point,

and you mustn't run any risks. Besides, you wouldn't be of any use here. I am going to stay. Somebody must see to the Chinaman; there will be things that a man can't do."

"But, Betty, I can't have you taking this risk. You are all I have, dear child, and you must go. We have telegraphed for Aunt Hope, and she will be here so soon."

"It will be four days. There's that long stage ride, you know. If anything did happen to Harold, or—" her voice broke suddenly; "or if you took it, how could I ever face them, after running away? Papa, I'm not a little baby; I'm almost a woman, and it would be babyish to go away and leave you."

"Not if you are in danger here."

"But I'm not."

"The doctor said——"

"Let him say," she interrupted. "He doesn't know me. I am perfectly strong and well; I don't catch things easily, and I never had a sore throat in all my life. That makes some difference, and he can dose me up beforehand to keep off the trouble. Till Aunt Hope comes, my place is here. Papa, I think I should die, if you sent me away to leave you like this." She had spoken quietly, but with

pressed nervousness. Now she stood waiting for her verdict.

"But what could you do, Betty?" her father urged. "You don't know anything about illness."

"It's time I learned, then," she said briefly. "And then, there are other things. Even if you take care of him, I must be here to see that you have all the things you need. You must have your meals; you must have some rest. The Chinaman can't see to everything. If you really insist upon it, I won't go inside Harold's room; but I must stay in the house till Aunt Hope comes." Then, as the doctor entered the room, she looked him straight in the eyes. "Doctor," she said; "I am going to stay here. Please have my cousin sent away at once."

The days which followed were dreary ones indeed. Protesting to the last, Mac had been forced to obey the doctor's orders and depart, for, as Betty had said, his throat was his weak point. Then the quiet routine of illness had fallen upon the house. Mr. Farrington had assumed charge of the invalid, and the Chinaman had taken up the kitchen duties as naturally as if a pinafore and a pigtail were insepa-

rable adjuncts. Of the actual drudgery, Betty had no share. It would have been a relief to her if she had. Harold's life was in actual danger, and under the circumstances she would have preferred less time for quiet meditation.

And yet, though her self-imposed duties were light, Betty did them in a way which showed the stuff of which she was made. To train up to the ways of the household a strange Mongolian of whom she stood in vague fear, to see to it that the supplies for the sickroom were ready at the proper time, to concoct the dainties her father liked best, to take countless steps to save his strength; above all, to meet him with an unfailing cheery smile which went no deeper than her lips, and coddle and pet him as only a daughter could do, all this was not much; but it sent her to bed, night after night, with aching feet and a heavy heart, to lie awake and cry quietly into her pillow over Harold and over the prospect of another long, lonely day. As the hours dragged on and her father's face grew more grave, the strain upon her nerves became almost unbearable. She did bear it, though, and she roused herself and nodded blithely, whenever she saw Mac and Percival standing outside in the

street and waving their hands towards her window. If only she could have had them to talk to, it would not have been so bad. And yet, it never once occurred to her to regret her decision to remain, or to question whether it had been worth while.

The doctor came three times, on the third day, and each time he lingered in the hall, talking with her father. It was then that Betty realized in full their piteous isolation. With the mother away from home, no trained nurse within reach and only a primitive supply of drugs at hand, here in this remote mining camp, the doctor and her father were having a hand-to-hand tussle with death to see which of them should claim Harold. The mental outlook was as desolate as the cold landscape outside the window. Then she steadied herself, as she heard her father's step. It would never do for him to find her crying; he had enough care, without having to comfort her, so she met him with her same brave little smile.

"It will settle itself by morning," she heard the doctor say, after his last visit.

Then the door had shut behind him, and, alone in the parlor, Betty sat watching the last

bleak light fade out from the snowy landscape. Across the street, Mac was waiting for a glimpse of her; but she lacked the courage to send him a cheerful greeting, and she would not let him see her tear-swollen face, so she kept back from the window and it was not until days afterwards that Mac knew how she had been hiding there, peering out at him, longing to have him come in and take her in his strong arms and let her sob with her head against his shoulder in the one spot which it fitted so well. Inside the house, the air was heavy with disinfectants, the strange hush of tragedy brooded over the rooms, and, upstairs, her father was alone with Harold, unless perchance the other Guest was already on the threshold.

Morning brought comfort. Betty wakened to find the snow falling heavily outside, and the house dark and dismal in the chilly dawn; yet she paid no heed to gloomy details. Her father was bending over her, saying,—

"Wake up, Betty girl, and hear the good news. The doctor is here, and he says Harold will pull through."

It was only a few hours afterwards that Betty forgot her loneliness, for she felt herself

cuddled into her mother's arms, while Theodora's voice said in her ears,—

"Betty, your father wants me to scold you; but, in your place, I think I should have done just as you did."

CHAPTER NINETEEN

"'CHRISTMAS comes but once a year,'" chanted Betty, as she went racing across the lawn and into the library at The Savins. "Merry Christmas, grandpa! My watch keeps just beautiful time."

"It suits, then?"

"I should say it did! I have wanted one so much, a gold one, not a silver one that looks as if it came with a magazine subscription. This is such a dear, and so are you." Betty perched herself on the arm of his chair, pulled off her grandfather's glasses, tucked his book under her arm and then, stooping, kissed the parting of his white hair. "Tell me," she demanded; "aren't you perfectly happy to have your own dear Betty at home again, after six long months?"

"I began to think my own dear Betty wouldn't be here for Christmas," he returned.

"Of course we wouldn't miss Christmas at The Savins; mamma never would allow that.

She said, last night, that the same old basket had done duty, every year since she was four years old, and that every single Christmas had seemed a little bit better than the one before it. I never knew till last night that papa was here to Christmases before he was married."

"Oh, yes, he was one of our boys, almost as much as Uncle Hubert."

"Grandpa," Betty asked; "just suppose you hadn't been the greatest doctor in the world, and cured papa so he could grow up and marry mamma?"

"Well?"

"Well, where would your Betty have been? You are a very important man, only you mustn't let my telling you so make you the least bit conceited." She took him by the two ears, turned his face towards her and deliberately chose a spot for another kiss. "Yes, I am glad to get back to you again," she added.

"Even if you did wait so long?"

"We couldn't help ourselves; it was really Harold's fault. We had to wait till he was well and all out of quarantine. Then Mr. Ainslee and Percival came East with us, and they insisted that we should stop in Chicago. I don't wonder, for I suppose Percival did

want to show us that he belonged to somebody not just like Mrs. Van Hicks and Adonis. Truly, she was preposterous." Betty paused to giggle. "His mother is as nice as Aunt Hope, though, and their house is a good deal like this, full of books and pictures and things, and not too fine for using, every day. Mrs. Ainslee used to know Uncle Giff, and he dedicated a song to her once. You know it; it's that little *Alone in a Garden* he wrote before Aunt Babe knew him."

"Where is Aunt Babe, you chatterbox?" her grandfather interrupted. "I haven't seen her since breakfast."

"Oh, she is over at our house. She heard mamma say she was going to start the engine and she said she should stay to see how she succeeded," Betty replied, with a fine disregard of her personal pronouns.

"It is your mother's first experience; isn't it?"

"Yes. The tank was full, when we came home, and it is only just empty. Patrick is so old that mamma doesn't dare trust him, and, if the new maids come, to-night, we must have a supply of water on hand. I have an idea that mamma wants to try it, herself, because she is

so mortal proud of Uncle Allyn. She has been down to look at it, a dozen times since we came home, and, every time, she says she always knew he would do something to be proud of."

"Where is your father?"

"He is there, too. He is going to help; but mamma won't let him do it alone, for fear he will take risks and blow up the house. They are going to light it, and Aunt Babe is going to sit on the cellar stairs and read the directions to them."

Her grandfather laughed.

"Why aren't you there to give them a little advice?" he asked.

She screwed her face into a knot expressive of doubt and derision.

"I thought I was safer, over here with you."

"So that is the reason of this devotion." He looked at his watch. "I hope they are starting operations, for dinner will be ready in an hour. Well, Betty, I must leave you. The Flaherity baby is only just alive, and I ought to go over to see if I can do anything for them."

"Oh, grandpa, Christmas! And when I've only just come home!" Betty remonstrated.

"There won't be much Christmas for the poor mother, I'm afraid," he said gravely. "Jump up, dear. I must go."

Left alone by the fire, Betty took possession of the easy chair and lost herself in thinking over the past six months. So much had happened in the time she had been away, and she had come home so much the richer! It was hard to realize that, when she had left home on the sixth of June, not only had Mac been a mere name to her, but she had never even heard of Percival Ainslee. Now both the boys held an important place in her life; she even wondered just how she was going to get on without them. Mac and she had promised to exchange weekly letters; but it was different with Percival, and boys were prone to forget so quickly. Then she buried her face in the bunch of heather which had reached her, that morning, and resolved that she would not think of the future. Girl nature is optimistic, and Betty assured herself that they never would have become such stanch friends, if Fate had intended them to drift apart again. Mac and Percival were to room together at Yale, and there was always the possibility of commencement.

"Betty, are you willing to run over and see what has become of your mother? Tell her that everything is ready for dinner, and it is time she was here."

Betty roused herself.

"Yes, grandma," she said obediently, and she departed in search of her missing family.

She found them in the cellar. Certain unmistakable details, such as their voices and their air of indisputable possession, proved their identity; otherwise, she would have found it difficult to recognize them. From floor to ceiling, the place was filled with a black, pitchy smoke which rolled up in clouds from the flames that flared angrily about the base of the little red engine in the corner. Near by, a dim point of light showed where a kerosene lamp was doing its best to cope with the situation; but the real light came from the flickering blaze which obviously should have had no connection with a well-bred stationary pumping engine named Cicely.

Beside the engine stood two figures who, Betty decided, must be her parents, since no other man and woman were likely to have taken their places. In deference to the uncertain flames, Theodora had cast aside her apron

and pinned her skirts into a neat bundle about her hips. Her white piqué waist was banded and barred with black smudges, and her face was decorated in the same fantastic manner. With her sleeves rolled to her elbows, she was applying all her strength to turning the balance wheel of the engine which protested noisily at the liberty. On his knees beside her, divested of his coat, waistcoat, collar and cuffs, and adorned with a sooty brow and nose, Mr. Farrington knelt in an ever-growing pool of water and plied a slender poker industriously.

"What do you think is the matter with it? It ought to go," Phebe was saying, from the relatively safe haven of the stairway.

"There seems to be a stoppage somewhere," Mr. Farrington replied.

"Obviously." Phebe's tone was crushing. "Why don't you poke it out?"

Mr. Farrington rested his head on the brick foundation of the engine and became temporarily cross-eyed in his endeavors to look up the chimney.

"I can't reach it," he said.

"You can, if you use the little poker. The directions tell you to loosen the soot with the

poker, in case any gathers. You see, it speaks doubtfully, as if it weren't likely to gather. I wonder if we started it right."

"We!" Mr. Farrington observed to Theodora, in an aside which the buzzing of the flame rendered inaudible to Mrs. Barrett on the stairs.

"Let's see," she went on, bending over to read the card in the fitful light. "'Turn the cock till the oil fills the cup below the burner. Close the cock. Light. As soon as the colorless gas begins to form, open the cock and regulate the flame to a proper height. Before starting the engine, close the cock on the air chamber.'"

"But how can you tell which cock is which, in such a poultry yard as this?" Theodora asked in exasperation, while she let go the balance wheel long enough to stretch out her aching wrists.

"Are you exhausted, Teddy?" her husband asked sympathetically.

"No; but the engine is," she replied, as, with a groan or two and a final wobble, it came to a dead halt.

"Why don't you pump up and down on the walking beam? That would be easier."

"Walking beam! You might as well call it a flying machine. This thing won't even walk, to say nothing of run," she returned, in a sudden outburst of disgust.

"Why, Teddy!" Mrs. Barrett said rebukingly. "How can you speak so of a machine that Allyn invented?"

"I should think he'd be ashamed to own it. If I were Cis, I'd sue him for libel," Theodora said tartly, as she seesawed up and down in company with the misnamed walking beam.

"I am as proud of it as I can be. Of course it will run," Phebe said loyally.

Mr. Farrington rubbed his sooty nose with his sooty fingers.

"Suppose you come and run it, then, Babe."

But a timely digression came to the aid of Mrs. Barrett.

"Mamma! Mamma Farrington! The back of your petticoat is on fire!"

"Where?" Theodora screwed herself about, in a futile attempt to get a view of her own back.

"It's nothing but wool. It won't burn, only smudge a little," Phebe said tranquilly. "Sit down on it hard, Teddy. That will put it out."

But Mr. Farrington had dropped the poker and gone to the rescue of his wife, while the engine took advantage of the lull to come to another halt.

"What ails the thing, papa?" Betty inquired, as once more her father resumed his devout attitude.

"Nothing, only it won't go."

"It won't blow up; will it?"

"It hasn't life enough."

"Have you oiled it?"

"Of course."

"And it won't go, then?"

"Apparently not."

"Isn't there a damper somewhere, to draw off a little of the smoke?"

"I haven't found any."

"It leaks, too. Are you sure you understand it?"

Mr. Farrington rose again and straightened out the kinks in his aching back.

"Betty, my fairest child," he suggested mildly; "I think you'd better go and play by yourself for a while. If you ask many more such questions, I may feel inspired to throw the poker at you."

"Teddy! Oh, Ted!" Hubert's voice came

ringing down the stairs, followed by a sound of strangling. "What in thunder is going on down here? Are you having an incantation scene to celebrate Christmas?" he added, when he could speak again.

Letting the engine rest, Theodora met him at the foot of the stairway.

"No; only a house-warming, with a little black art to set it off."

"I should judge so from the look of your face. No; I absolutely decline to be embraced. Is anything wrong?"

"The Cicely is a little reluctant to show off her paces; that's all. It's a great thing to be an inventor, Hu."

"Apparently. But can I be of service? I have wrestled with ours occasionally."

"Does it behave like this?"

Hubert's glance took in the smoke-dimmed cellar, the roaring blaze and the demoralized countenances of the engineers.

"Not exactly."

"One engine differeth from another engine in antics," Theodora paraphrased gravely. "What do you suppose is the matter with it?"

Hubert bent down to look at the engine.

"I should humbly advise you to shut the escape cock," he suggested.

"Oh!" Theodora said blankly. Then she rallied. "Did you want anything, when you called, Hu?" she inquired.

"Nothing especial; only you. Mother says the dinner is freezing. Didn't Betty tell you?"

"Oh, I forgot," Betty exclaimed penitently. "You see, mamma was on fire, and——"

Theodora held up her hand.

"Sh-h-h!" she commanded. "Don't any of you disturb it. I really believe it is going to start."

There was a wheeze, a puff and a squeak. Then Mr. Farrington arose from his knees and gently laid down his poker. The Cicely engine had bestirred itself and picked up its languid heels. For the space of a moment, Theodora stood and watched it.

"I always told you we should live to be proud of Allyn," she said contentedly. Then she stooped and turned off the oil.

The Savins was decked for the annual festival of the McAlisters. As Betty had said, since her mother's childhood, the Christmas ceremonial had been unchanged. The

Christmas greens, and the Christmas basket, and the Christmas roses with which Mrs. McAlister always garlanded the picture of Theodora's own mother, all these came as regularly as the coming of the day itself. The wreaths and the basket had been customs established by the first Mrs. McAlister, the Christmas after The Savins was built, and, from that time onward, there had been few breaks in the family circle gathered about the Christmas dinner. Allyn had been unable to be present, this year; but the Farringtons had hurried their return from the West, and the Barretts had come from New York, so it was a long row of faces that looked up expectantly, as the doctor rose for the Christmas toast.

"To all we love!" he said.

"Especially to our absent uncle, the famous inventor," Betty added irrepressibly.

CHAPTER TWENTY

AN easterly storm was driving across the Yale campus, so that from a room on the ground floor of Lawrance the passers-by appeared to be all legs and umbrella. Up in the corner by the chapel, the deserted class fences rose from the midst of a broad pool of water; little rivulets trickled down the stony nose of President Pierson, and the low hallway through the old Treasury was converted into a species of canal by the dripping umbrellas stacked outside the door of the harmony room.

With his broad back supported by a choice collection of cushions, McAlister Holden lay on the window-seat. By good rights, the book in his hand should have been *The Outlines of Descriptive Psychology*, since on the morrow there was to be an examination in that redoubtable study. Instead of that, it was a worn copy of *The Newcomes;* but it lay, face downward, across Mac's knee and Mac's eyes

were fixed on the rain-washed pavement outside his window.

"Oh, Percival!" he called at length.

"Hullo?"

"What are you doing?"

Percival Ainslee emerged from his sleeping room on the other side of the building.

"Beautifying myself. It's almost supper time."

"Who is going to be your prom. girl?" Mac asked abruptly.

Percival dropped into the Morris chair. It promptly fell to pieces under his weight, and he moved to the couch across the room. The past three years had changed him but little. He was taller and broader of shoulder than of old, but his freckled face was as boyishly honest as it had been on the day he had left Quantuck.

"'F I know," he replied briefly.

"Time you were thinking about it," Mac assured him.

"I'm waiting for you to set the fashion."

"Oh, my mind was made up, long ago."

"Who?"

"Betty, of course."

"All right. So is mine, then."

"Who?"

"Nobody."

"Get out! Of course you must ask somebody, when you're on prom. committee."

"All the more reason I should do as I choose. Besides, you have the only girl I want."

Mac whistled.

"Oh, so that's it. Well, you can ask her, then, and I suppose I can take Florence Long. Of course, I'd rather have Betty; but there's no reason they shouldn't both be here."

Percival shook his head.

"No; Betty is your cousin, and you ought to have first choice. Moreover, she is so young that the chances are ten to one that her mother wouldn't let her come on my invitation. With you, there's no question. You'll probably let me have a dance or two, as long as Betty and I used to be such chums."

"Oh, yes," Mac assented; "only I don't want to stand in your way. As you say, Betty is my cousin; but perhaps——" He turned hastily to look at his friend, as a low chuckle fell upon his ears.

Percival smiled back at him tranquilly.

"Has it ever occurred to you that there are

other events beside the prom. itself, Mac?" he inquired, while he lazily stretched himself out at full length and stuffed a handful of pillows under his head. "You always were an innocent youth; and, in your innocence, you have blundered upon a plan that suits me to perfection. As my prom. girl, your aunt might not let Betty come. It would be too much honor for a freshman. For her cousin —that's another matter. Mrs. Farrington will bring Betty to be the guest of Mr. McAlister Holden. Unfortunately, Mr. McAlister Holden is in the choir and on the 'Varsity glee club, and can't take care of his cousin on Sunday morning or on Monday evening. What could be more natural or fitting than that his devoted chum, Mr. Percival Ainslee, should give up his own plans and generously take under his protection the guests of Mr. McAlister Holden? Behold!"

"Percival, you have a canny intellect," Mac observed approvingly.

"So I have often noticed. But I'd be willing to bet, Mac, that there won't be a prettier girl or a better dancer at the prom., this year."

"Not if Aunt Ted can make her so, and there will be precious few more stunning chap-

erons. Aunt Ted in her war-paint is a sight for gods and men and the prom. committee. I think I'll write to her, to-night; then, if she is willing, I'll proceed to break the tidings to Betty."

"Put me down for any extra duty you may happen to need," Percival offered generously. "You might hint that, owing to the press of committee work, I sha'n't be able to invite anybody. By the way, tell Mrs. Farrington that she owes me a letter," he added, for he had not allowed Theodora to forget her promise of an occasional correspondence, and he revelled in her long, gossipy letters.

By supper time, the conspirators had completed their plans, and Mac's letter to his aunt was written and sealed. Upon reflection, the idea of sharing his prom. girl with his chum rather appealed to him. It was not a commonplace proceeding; but neither was their intimacy a commonplace one. In spite of the four years' difference in their ages, the two boys were as inseparable as the Siamese twins, and Mac, with his rather sedate notions of what a young girl should be, was quite ready to hand Betty over into Percival's keeping. It had worried him a little that he could escort

her neither to chapel nor to the concert; moreover, even at the prom., he could not well dance all the dances with her. Really, Percival's suggestion was an ideal one, notwithstanding the salient material it would offer for the class historian.

College rooms are all a good deal alike. The tea-table and the chafing dish are more in evidence at Smith than at Yale, perhaps; but the heterogeneous assortment of sofa pillows, college flags and art of the poster variety is common to them both. There had been some grumbling, some talk of maternal influence, when Betty Farrington, a mere freshman, had deposited her belongings in Fifteen, Washburn. The room, though over the kitchen, was desirable as being one of the largest in the house, and Betty, as she lay on the window-seat in the broad west window, felt that the extra space atoned for various ascending aromas and for the matin sound of the chopping knife. The room was a dainty blending of blue and white; but the blue silk flags crossed on the eastern wall were not hung there solely with the thought of Mac.

Betty was having an unmistakable attack of the dumps. She had planned to spend one

last afternoon out on the golf links. Instead of that, she had waded home across a soaked campus where the first snow of the year was rapidly repenting of its appearing and hurrying to change itself back to water as soon as possible. Once in her room, Betty had cast aside her damp clothing, put on a trailing blue wrapper and thrown herself down on the window-seat where she lay frowning at the back campus and wishing something agreeable would happen to make her forget the weather and the four lessons she had to prepare for the morrow.

Beyond the minor detail of the weather, there was no real reason that Betty should have had the dumps. Trained from her babyhood to the belief that Smith College was the ideal goal for every right-minded girl, Betty's loyalty to her *alma mater* in point of time had developed with her sub-freshman classics, in extent it had far outranked them. Her anticipations had been fully realized. It seemed to her that she could never forget those first warm days of early autumn, before the class ivies on College Hall had lost their ruddy green, or that golden Indian summer when the soft haze hung low over Mount Tom, and the

broad streets of the dear old town were carpeted with the fresh-fallen leaves.

Certain honors are possible, even for a freshman, especially for a freshman whose mother is one of the alumnæ trustees and sits on the platform at commencement time. It was an open secret that Betty Farrington's name was omitted from freshman elections in order that she might hold office in her junior year; but there were unnumbered committees which needed her, and the two leading societies were already writing her name on their lists of possible candidates for election.

These things mattered little to Betty, however. She counted it much more important to be the best golf player in Smith College, to be asked to innumerable spreads and to make a fair showing in freshman mathematics where her healthy hatred of formulæ was counterbalanced by a girlish devotion to the head of the mathematics department. For the rest, she adored her roommate, she tolerated study and she was rather inclined to grudge the flight of each happy day as it passed her. This was the freshman epoch. Later on, she would totter under the weight of the responsibility of being a representative student of the

greatest and best college in the world. The latter years have their own advantages; but there is something delightful in the care-free existence of the healthy, popular freshman.

"Oh, you lazy Betty!"

"What now?" Betty turned her face from the window, as her roommate, Florence Long, dropped an armful of books into a chair and came forward to her side.

"Why aren't you over at the gym? Everybody is there."

"I'm not," Betty replied coolly.

"Why not?"

"Too wet."

"I'm going."

"So much the better! You can shout for us both."

Florence sat down on the edge of the window-seat.

"Betty, you are a disgrace to your mother's name. My mother has told me of her prowess in basket ball, and here are you, her child, reposing in a wrapper, instead of cheering on your team. Wake up!"

"No." Betty contemplated the toes of her Turkish slippers thoughtfully. "I'm not going to wake up, Florence. I rather think I'll

take a nap, instead. My doll is leaking damp sawdust, and I am going to drown my cares in sleep. Did you bring up the mail?"

"I didn't look. I knew we were going directly down again."

"But we aren't. You are, though, Florence, and you are going to bring me some letters. Do, there's a dear girl! I can't go down, with my hair in such a state."

"It's a sin to impose on me," Florence grumbled, as she rose to obey.

"You shouldn't be so meek, then," Betty called after her. Then she rumpled her hair into a tawny aureole and lay back, contentedly listening to the retreating footsteps of her friend. "How many?" she demanded, as soon as Florence reappeared.

"None."

"You know you are fibbing," Betty returned tranquilly. "I can see them sticking out of your pocket, so you may as well hand them over."

"Take them, then." Florence tossed them down beside her. "It isn't proper for a freshman to have so many, Betty."

"Oh, what luxury!" Betty sighed rapturously. "I feel better in my mind already.

Perhaps, if you'll wait till I've read them, I'll go over to the gym, after all. Let's see: a package from papa, no, two of them, and letters from him and Mac and three, four others."

She seized upon her father's letter first, and read it with a little contented smile playing about the corners of her mouth.

"Such a dear man!" she commented. "He is going to take us to New York, for a week of the holidays. He says I'll probably want some new gowns by that time. Now for Mac! The other letters will keep; but I must see what the dear old fellow says. His letters always leave such a good taste in my mouth."

"Hurry up and devour it, then," her roommate commanded. "You'll have to dress, and I can't wait forever."

Lying flat on her back, Betty opened the letter with provoking deliberation. She read three lines; then she sat up, her face scarlet with pleasure, and cast herself upon the shoulder of her mystified friend.

"Oh, Florence, envy me!" she gasped. "Mac wants me for his prom. girl, and he says that mamma is going to let me go."

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

BETTY FARRINGTON possessed her own due share of feminine vanity, and she spent a long half-hour before her mirror, one morning in late January. At last, she turned to her mother.

"Am I right, mamma?" she asked meekly.

"Very right, dear," Theodora answered, with a glance of maternal approval at the tailor-made suit and at the trim little toque above the bright hair. "Your violets are beautiful against that green."

"Are you nearly ready? Here come the boys."

"Go down to the parlor, then, and I will be ready in a minute. You know you'll have to look out for yourself, after chapel, for I have promised to lunch at Professor Stein's."

"What for? It's much more fun to have you with us; it makes just the right number. Isn't it strange that Percival hasn't anybody here?"

"Very," Mrs. Farrington responded as fervently as if Mac had not betrayed the situation to her, the night before. "Now run along, dear, and don't keep them waiting alone."

And Betty obediently picked up her muff and went down to the hotel parlor to meet the boys as they came in.

To Betty's mind, the entire chapel service, that morning, centred itself upon one tall blond junior in the choir. From the moment he came striding up the side aisle with his blue-corded gown flapping about his long legs, she lost consciousness of everything else, of the beautiful building, of the crowds of students all in their best array to do honor to the prom. girls, even of Percival at her side. The prelude of the organist was merely a march played in Mac's honor; the preacher had Mac in his mind, when he announced his text regarding the perfect man, and the anthem of the choir was, to the ears of his loyal young cousin, a species of obligato solo by McAlister Holden.

"No; I don't spoil him," she said to Percival afterwards. "I wouldn't do that for anything; but I can't help being glad that my

own cousin is the most ideal man in the whole university."

Percival shrugged his shoulders whimsically.

"That's hard on the rest of us, Betty. You haven't lived with Mac as long as I have."

"I've summered and wintered with him, though. Besides, you know, yourself, that he is popular. Of course I am proud of him. I haven't any brother, and he fills just that place."

"Don't you want a pair of brothers?" he inquired suggestively.

"Oh, I'm fond of Harold; but not in the same way," Betty replied demurely. "I love to look at Mac, even. Isn't he big and splendid?"

"Miss Farrington, you are a hero-worshipper."

"Mr. Ainslee, you are critical."

"You told me once I was horribly rude."

"When was that?"

"At Quantuck, the day we went up the lighthouse."

"The day you sprained your wrist? I remember. Well, yes, you were. How we used to fight!"

"You were awfully cranky at first," he re-

marked thoughtfully. "I never could see just why you spited me so."

Betty cocked her eyes up at him roguishly.

"Percival, there are no petty reservations about you; you'll be frank till the end of time. Do you remember how you stalked up to me, with the water squishing in your shoes, that first morning, and delivered yourself of your opinion of my bad manners?"

He laughed at the memory.

"It was pretty bad."

Betty shook her head gravely.

"Yes, it was. I had to forgive you, though, because you rescued me from the fire. Did you ever tell?"

"My mother."

"So did I; but not till you appeared in Montana. She promised not to tell anybody but papa. She said you were——"

"Did you know that Mrs. Van Hicks died, last fall?" Percival interrupted.

"No. Did she? You don't sound broken-hearted."

"I was, though, for she willed that old brute of a pug to me."

"Was that all? I thought——" Betty checked herself abruptly.

"You thought I was going to come in for her money? Well, so did everybody else; but I didn't. At the last minute, she decided that Percival wasn't a close enough namesake to count, so she left her funds to a day nursery for little coons, on condition it should be called the Colored Persis Nursery. I don't know whether she expected a whole crop of little coon Persises to be named for her, or whether she alluded to her own complexion. Anyhow, I only came in for Adonis and an enormous gold-headed cane, part of her husband's trousseau."

"I'm glad of it," Betty said flatly. "It didn't seem like you to be waiting around on the chance of getting her money."

"I was glad, too. I hated the whole business, especially the name. Percival sounds like a tenth-rate novel."

They were sitting alone in the west gallery of the empty chapel. While Mac had gone to take off his gown, and Mrs. Farrington had been carried off by Professor Stein, Percival had made his escape with Betty. Tempted by the crisp winter air, they had walked far up the hill beyond the observatory. Then, retracing their steps, they had strolled back to

the chapel again, to give Betty a chance to study the inside of the building. After the glare on the snow outside, it seemed dim and shadowy to her; yet, now that Mac was not there to absorb her whole attention, she was impressed by the dignified beauty of the place.

Far at the other end of the building, the organist was playing; otherwise they had the place to themselves, and they talked almost in whispers, that they might not break in upon the musician's reverie. Softly, daintily, he played the *Pastoral Symphony*. Then, with a sudden clatter of the shifting stops, the deeper tones of the organ came swelling out in the *Pilgrims' Chorus*, that often-played favorite which never grows trite or inexpressive. Till the last note died away, Betty sat silent, her hands crossed idly on top of her muff, her eyes fixed on the homely face of Percival who, unconscious of her gaze, was watching the dim figure at the organ. The *Pilgrims' Chorus* is short; yet it gave Betty plenty of time to go over all the details of a summer, three years before.

"Do you like Wagner?" she asked abruptly, when the pilgrims had vanished in the distance.

"I've only heard *Lohengrin;* I didn't mind that much. Why?"

"Oh, nothing. I heard *Parsifal* in the holidays, and I was thinking——" She left her sentence unfinished.

"So this is where you are!" Mac's voice remarked in their ears. "I've hunted the whole town over for you. Percival, I wish you would please to remember that Betty is my prom. girl, not yours."

No one but a member of the prom. committee could have found a quiet spot in the armory, the next Tuesday evening. The great barn-like place was bright with bunting and palms and pretty gowns, and the gay hum of voices only yielded now and then to the crash of the band. Every nook and corner seemed full; yet Percival deftly steered Betty through the crowd and landed her behind a row of palms which offered shelter for a couple of chairs.

"Tired, Betty?" he had asked, as he came up to claim his second dance.

"What a question! Do I look it?"

"Yes," he responded calmly, as he stared down into her eager face. "You look ready to drop, and so do I. Let's sit it out."

"What for?"

"To talk, of course."

"Oh, but just hear that band!" she demurred.

"Yes; but I am footsore and weary, and my best shoes pinch like fury. We can't talk while we are dancing, Betty. Let's hie away to some bright little isle of our own, and have a good gossip."

"Take me once round, then," she commanded, laughing. "You can talk, when you come up to Smith, next term; but you can't dance like this."

However, when they were sitting together behind the palms, a sudden and unaccountable silence fell upon them both. Percival seemed absent-minded, and Betty found it impossible to break in upon his meditations, so she fidgeted with her flowers, while he sat and scowled at the floor. Once or twice they talked a little; but the talk was fitful and quickly died away again. At last, Betty rose.

"It's time you took me back again to mamma, Percival. Mr. Bourne will be looking for me."

Without rising, he turned and looked up at her. She stood before him, a slender, white-

gowned figure which reminded him of a little girl he had danced with, one far-off night in Montana. Her neck and arms were bare now, and her bright hair was piled high on top of her head. The girl had given place to the woman; but it was still the same old Betty who stood there, and the dark color rushed to Percival's cheeks, as he watched her.

"Betty," he said brokenly; "we've been such chums, you know; and don't you suppose that —sometime—I don't mean now, but after a few years——"

There was no coquetry in Betty's manner. She understood him, and, with the simplicity of a child, she showed her understanding.

"We're nothing but a boy and girl now, Percival," she answered gravely. "We are too young to know, or to make any plans; but, next to Mac, I like you better than any other man I have ever known."

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE SAVINS had put on its festal array, one morning in June. The lawn was cropped to the last degree of sleekness, the borders were gay with early flowers, pinks and peonies and bright yellow primroses, while the old house itself was wreathed with roses which clambered over the verandas and even jostled one another to peer in at the garret windows. Above, the great trees, hickories and oaks and chestnuts, were clothed in the clean, fresh green of early summer. Still above, the sky was flecked with an occasional white cloud which only served to intensify the dazzling blue beyond.

It was the eightieth birthday of Dr. McAlister, and his children had gathered in the old home to do him honor. Hope and her husband had come from Montana, Harold from Yale, while Mac had hurried home from Paris to join in the festival. Hubert and the Farringtons were already near at hand; but

Allyn and Cicely had come from Pittsburg, and Mr. Barrett had refused to conduct an orchestra in Chicago, that night, in order to go with his wife and their three sons.

Every long and useful life deserves its celebration; but few more than that of a man like Dr. McAlister. He had saved Billy Farrington from a life of invalidism; but he had spent even longer hours in working over sickly babies and fretful grandmothers in homes where gruff thanks were his only return. In his home and in his profession he had filled his place nobly. At eighty, he was still strong and erect, still mentally alert, still in the harness which he had worn all his life.

"When I am seventy-five, Bess," he had said to his wife, one day; "I am going to drop out of all paying practice. I have money enough for you and for starting that namesake of mine; it is only fair I should abdicate in favor of the younger men. But, as long as I can, I am going to have a private dispensary in Water Street. It will keep my hand in, and give me something to do."

Among these patients of his later years, the news had spread that this was the doctor's birthday. All day long, they had been ap-

pearing, laden with offerings, bits of flowers and wonderful homemade gifts which somehow were not quite ludicrous. For each one of them, the doctor had a word of cordial greeting, as he stood on the doorstep with the sun shining down upon his thick white hair. It meant much to him, this uninvited reception in his honor.

At noon, there was a family dinner, with toasts and with gifts from them all. They lingered long at the table; but, when they rose, Theodora and Betty went away together. Up-stairs, in the room which Theodora had occupied as a girl, the bed was covered with soft white finery, and a white wreath lay on the table. Theodora glanced at it. Then, sitting down in a chair, she drew her tall daughter down into her lap.

"Oh, Betty, my dearest, how can I give you up?" she cried.

"I know, mamma. I've been so happy with you; but—it's Percival, you know."

For nearly an hour they sat there, talking together as only mother and daughter can ever talk. Then Theodora gently pushed the girl to her feet.

"Come, Betty, we mustn't show any red

eyes and noses, to-day," she said bravely. "Now I must turn dressing maid, for it is almost time for Percival to come. Oh, Betty girl, is this going to be the last time that I shall dress my little girl?"

The dressing was a prolonged operation, mingled as it was with tears and smiles and kisses. The first of the guests had already appeared, when Theodora covered the red-gold hair with the long white veil, and then hurried away to dress herself and to see that her husband was in readiness.

Half an hour later came a surprise arranged by Gifford Barrett, a surprise to every one but his wife. Just as the late sunset was yellowing the grass, there arose a sudden strain of music such as The Savins had never heard till then. Twenty of the best men in Mr. Barrett's orchestra had come up from New York, that morning; and now, while the guests were assembling under the trees at the west of the house, at a signal from their conductor, they had taken their places on the broad east veranda and burst into a triumphal march.

In years to come, the critics ranked the *Festival Suite* as Gifford Barrett's best work.

There were few critics at The Savins, that day; but the intimate friends gathered there realized that the composer had put his whole soul into those sonorous harmonies which could have but one subject, the fruition of a well-spent life. Then there came a dainty, tripping minuet, followed by the climax of the suite, the wedding march of Betty Farrington. They played it through to the very end; then, still more gladly and triumphantly they repeated it, while the simple bridal party came out from the house and crossed the lawn towards the hushed and waiting guests.

Under a great oak tree they paused, and there, while the violins sang low and the birds twittered in the boughs above them, Betty Farrington and Percival Ainslee plighted their troth. A moment of silence followed the blessing; then, as they raised their heads, a last beam of sunlight shot straight across the hill and lay like a benediction upon Betty's bright hair and upon Percival's honest, manly face.

"Papa, has it been a happy day?" Theodora asked.

The young husband and wife had gone away, and the guests had followed. Inside

the house, the family were pulling off their gloves and rumpling up their best clothes, while they talked over the events of the day; but Theodora had followed her father out to the veranda and stood resting her hand on his shoulder, watching his face in the clear moonlight.

"Perfectly," he answered. "You've all done so much to make it so. Ted, there aren't many happier men, to-night, than I."

"Because you have helped make so many other people happy?" she questioned.

"Because I am so content with my children. With Hope and Babe so happily married and their children doing so well, with Hubert making a reputation in law, and Allyn patenting his third engine, and you —— Oh, Teddy, I'm proud of your books; but I'm prouder still of your womanhood!"

Theodora laughed.

"Dear daddy," she said, half tenderly, half teasingly; "don't you think we have heard enough about the deeds of the McAlisters? It seems to me it is high time to change the subject."

THE END

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